













*Robert Donald*



*Claude Harris*

SIR ROBERT DONALD G.B.I. I.L.D.

# *Robert Donald*

*Being the authorized biography of Sir Robert Donald, G.B.E., LL.D., journalist, editor and friend of statesmen*

*by*

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*"JIX, Viscount Brentford," "Smith of Birkenhead,"*

*"The Strange Case of Andrew Bonar Law,"*

*etc.*

*With a Foreword*

*by*

*The Right Honourable*

*J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.*

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## *Author's Acknowledgments*

IT had been the intention of Sir Robert Donald to write an autobiography, but he did not keep a diary, and it is obvious that he was relying upon an excellent memory to bridge the many, inevitable gaps in his correspondence and memoranda. In these circumstances I have been obliged frequently to turn to his friends for assistance, and I wish here to acknowledge my indebtedness for all the help I have received from such sources. I am equally grateful to those who have permitted me to quote correspondence, and to Mr. E. F. P. Bartlett for letting me incorporate his verses on Fleet Street.

I wish to thank particularly, both on Lady Donald's behalf and my own, the Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald), who interrupted a holiday taken on medical advice to write the appreciation of Sir Robert which forms the foreword of this book. I should add, perhaps, though he has not asked for such a statement, that Mr. MacDonald had no opportunity of reading the proofs of the book before it went to press.

That Lady Donald should have invited me to write this biography is something which I shall regard always as a great honour, and my appreciation of it is enhanced by the fact that although she has given me invaluable assistance in many directions she has left me entirely free to treat the subject in my own way. On me alone, therefore, must fall any criticism of the portrait I have presented, or of the manner in which, after very careful consideration, I have chosen to tell the story of Sir Robert Donald's life.

H. A. TAYLOR.



## Foreword

SCOTTISH characteristics and Scottish newspaper training have laid a special highway across the Border to Fleet Street, and along that highway . . . years ago came Robert Donald.

The Banffshire farm is a stimulating nursery. It yields nothing for nothing ; its heart is of flint, indeed of even a rougher material ; it is " out-of-the-way "—so much so that when the spring tide of the Reformation washed over the land, remoteness was like a dyke protecting great parts of Banffshire from the upheaval.

The people, however—or perhaps one ought to write, " therefore "—know the true values of life ; hardship has strengthened them for the fray of living ; they do not complain that they are not as comfortable as other men are, but valuing education both in books and in the manly spirit prepare their sons to go forth to live a hard life honestly and uprightly and to find work interesting to themselves and of service to others.

To them, the Press was one of the coveted honourable professions. A number of truly high class and well-written weekly papers were published in the county. They gave the news of their districts and discussed the business of the Parties at Westminster with a zest untarnished by any thought of reward or fame ; the editorials were rooted in deep principles of church and state with historical memory as the background. *Johnnie Gibb of Gushetneuk*, by Dr. W. Alexander of Aberdeen (himself an editor and newspaper writer), unfolds the rich life of humour, of interest in the abiding things of existence, of simple and unswerving honesty, from which Robert Donald came.

The editors of the smaller weekly papers were generally also their printers and could set up editorials as well as write them ; and for but a few pence a week—or for nothing at all—local correspondents supplied such news as reports of Debating Societies, deaths of worthies, snowstorms or early sproutings, pulpit supplies and the like. The youth of journalistic promise was marked out, London sometimes required a northern correspondent, a London pressman sometimes had an opportunity to fill a job from his own neighbourhood. Thus Fleet Street was supplied and from the stream a specially good discovery was often made.

The Fleet Street of to-day was not born when Donald arrived. The " story " stunt was still in the gutter, bedraggled and disreputable. A news paragraph that during the day was found to be false was followed by a castigation if not dismissal ; the news column was meant to be, by both editors and their subordinates, the sanctuary of truth ; the dashing war whoops of the political leading articles had to be accompanied by the solid offensive material of sound sense and weighty argument ; the careless reader had not been massed as a field of circulation. The discovery had not been made that false news and baseless rumour issued as news would not damage sales. There was perhaps a lack of enterprise in all this. It was a profound mistake to abandon the shifting undergrowths of stable opinion to such papers as the then *Police News* and the *Family Herald*. The newspapers owed them some earnest attention, but Fleet Street then lacked a psychologist who saw how the neglected ones could be exploited. The Victorian Press was doomed. Its virtues became dull ; it lived in a cultivated patch not in the wide domain of democracy.

It was unfortunate that the revolutionising movements came as a copying of United States methods, but the field was unprotected, British traditions were neglecting it and the revolution came with an overseas accent.

Robert Donald lived through the revolution and played

no small part in trying to direct it into right channels. To the end, he kept the light burning which he took with him from home: that the Press should be controlled by men who believed that they had a moral obligation to perform to public life and to the opinion which sustains it. He had a firm political faith which gave him a cause to serve. He was the first man to see the new function which municipalities had to perform in the political development of the modern state, and his *Municipal Journal* is a permanent landmark in that development. In national politics he was a Liberal of the Socialistic school, and was amongst the first to see that mere political Radicalism had no continuing lead to offer to the electors. He was of those who from the very beginning of the change understood the inner significance of the independent Labour movement inspired by the Socialist—at any rate, the British Socialist—conception of history, and assumed that the Liberal Party would split and a new Progressive Party would arise to rally both the practical sense and idealism of the youth of the nation. With later Liberalism he was impatient as one who saw others trifling and fumbling with changes which were marking a new epoch in the history of British politics.

I saw much of him during the last twenty years. Then his Scottish characteristics of caution, practical sense, forethought and foresight came out. Caught up in the eddying currents of those years since the war—years of real anxiety and legitimate difference in judgment festooned by personal rivalry, unscrupulous propaganda, ill-concealed partisan manœuvrings, he kept true to his compass of rectitude and sacrificed not a little in consequence. He never followed the new idols which Liberalism in distress set up. Once the war was fought, he knew that the old things had passed away, and when the financial crisis of 1931 came he saw that the only way to recovery lay in a national combination in which he hoped that the Labour Government would retain its position, but when he found that it drew back and returned to the stage of pure propaganda from which its understanding

friends hoped it had emerged, he threw himself with all his diminished health and strength into making a national combination a reality. An insidious disease had gripped him, and the services he rendered to the country at that time were his last.

As an editor, he followed the best traditions of British journalism, though, like Mr. Fletcher, a predecessor in the editorship of the *Daily Chronicle*, he knew that great changes in journalism had begun and would go far. He dreaded the effect on journalism of a vast mass of readers of untrained judgment and with but rudimentary powers of reflection, who could be swayed by the simple emotions and be kept as readers by a supply of "astounding," "sensational" and such-like "stories," but he tried to meet the problem which the new armies of newspaper readers presented by interesting them in matters of serious importance. The *Daily Chronicle's* success under Mr. Fletcher in extending its circulation by rousing a wider interest in literature improved for the time being the standards of political intelligence and was an important factor in the new thought which then made itself felt in public life. Robert Donald played no small part in this newspaper movement. It was his way of meeting the new requirements of democratic responsibility and government. The various deteriorating influences of the war checked this movement, and Donald not only had to regret the set-back to his policy, but found himself unable to hold the ground from which he could rally the moral and intellectual forces which he had helped to bring into being. He dreaded the effect of the capitalisation of newspaper property and the use of newspapers as ordinary articles of merchandise. He saw that the race for circulation would not improve the Press of the country. But he accepted it as inevitable as a phase, and did his best to restrain its worst results by raising the standards by which readers valued newspaper qualities.

His personal relations with the journalist won for him the confidence of his fellow craftsmen. His hand and advice

were always available for the assistance of every promising recruit to Fleet Street. Many a struggling journalist whose capacity had since been established owed his opportunities to Robert Donald. No one could detect better than he sound qualities, no one was more adventurous in giving chances and in using his papers to test and encourage hard working journalists of independent thought who showed devotion to their craft. During his ruling days such men instinctively turned to Robert Donald for help and, if they could use it when given, they were rarely turned away. His high conception of the functions of both newspaper and editor included the closest and most confidential relations between the chief and his staff; the chief expecting sincerity, ability and hard work, the staff receiving in return the treatment of men who did not belong to a hired profession but whose self-respect was never injured by their service. The editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, up to its sale as a party broadsheet and a financial property, rendered memorable service both to the Press of our country and to the honourable profession of journalism, and when he left the high places of Fleet Street every journalist who loved his calling knew that it was no small thing which had happened. The memorial service held in St. Bride's Church after his death was a fitting and moving farewell of Fleet Street to one who had served it well, one who was ever jealous for its reputation and power, one who had left many intimate and grateful memories of generous kindness and considerate helpfulness.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.





# Robert Donald

## CHAPTER I

### BETWEEN TWO WARS

Three Saints in their churches keep watch over Fleet Street,  
Saint Bride to the South and Saint Andrew to North,  
While honest Saint Dunstan he sits by the Temple  
And sees all the paper vans run back and forth.

Says Saint Bride to Saint Dunstan : " Oh what is the uproar ?  
I am all of a tremble from steeple to pews."  
He says " My dear Bridget, I pray you, don't fidget,  
They're printing the papers to tell you the news."

Three Saints in their churches keep watch over Fleet Street  
With the presses a-roaring on every side,  
So pray for the people who bring out the papers  
O Holy Saint Andrew, Saint Dunstan, Saint Bride.

E. F. P. BARTLETT.

**M**EN talk of Fleet Street as though it were immune from change in its outer aspect, like some ancient seat of learning. But that is an illusion, sustained no doubt by the fact that St. Paul's still crowns Ludgate Hill, that the churches of St. Dunstan and St. Bride also abide where Wren put them, and that no licensing bench has been so foolhardy as to attempt to close any of its numerous and familiar taverns.

So much is immutable. For the rest, the only unchanging feature of the street is the pronounced discord of its architecture, so symbolic of the undisciplined individualism of the

profession whose centre it is, and of the proprietors whom that profession serves.

The changes made in Fleet Street in recent years have been so numerous that it is not easy even for those who trod its footpaths in pre-war years to remember the aspect which the street presented in August, 1914. Perhaps the feature least difficult to recall (because it remained unchanged for five years or more) was a vacant site on the southern side, between Whitefriars Street and Salisbury Square.

When in the spring of 1914 that site was cleared, *habitués* of the street pointed to it as evidence of the remarkable progress of the *Daily Chronicle*, and of the prosperity of Frank Lloyd, the proprietor of the paper. For the moment, the newspaper was being produced under restricted conditions in a portion of its old home in Whitefriars Street, while a new wing, on which the builders were working day and night, would carry the structure across to Salisbury Square, where it would link up with the offices of that other Lloyd concern, the great paper-making company. On completion of the new wing, the builders were to begin an even larger operation which would give the premises a broad, imposing frontage in Fleet Street.

Thus the *Daily Chronicle* building would become the largest newspaper office in London. That implied progress, real progress, for Frank Lloyd was not a man for empty ostentation. The need of the paper dictated the size of the office.

Among daily newspapers, the *Daily Chronicle* now claimed to have the largest sale in London and the Home Counties. There were certain papers which had a larger sale, taking the whole country as their area of circulation ; but that superior result was achieved only by having expensive repetition offices in Manchester, wherein were produced special editions covering Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the North of England. The *Chronicle* had then no such duplicate office, and could not exploit efficiently the more distant territories :

but within the area in which it met its rivals on an equal footing, its claim to ascendancy was expressed thus : " The net sale of the *Daily Chronicle* exceeds the *combined* sales of the following London penny papers : *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *Standard*, *Daily Graphic*, and *Morning Advertiser*."

The history of the *Daily Chronicle* reached back to 1852, when it was established by a Clerkenwell printer named Pickburn. The primary purpose of the paper in its earliest days was to present advertisements of interest to the watch-making industry, of which Clerkenwell was then the centre ; and no charge was made for the sheet. So modest were its beginnings that Pickburn's wife was obliged to help in the production of the paper by rolling ink on the formes of type. From a weekly advertising sheet it became a bi-weekly newspaper, with the title of the *Clerkenwell News* and a charge of a halfpenny per copy was instituted. Progress continued until a daily issue became feasible.

In 1876, the paper being then a thoroughly prosperous little property, Edward Lloyd cast covetous eyes upon it. Lloyd, who had founded *Lloyd's Weekly News*, was shrewd and enterprising, so enterprising, in fact, that he had used the rocks of the Welsh mountains as billboards on which to advertise his paper. Nor was that his most notable effort in cheap publicity. Until the Government stepped in and prohibited the practice, he even defaced the coin of the realm by stamping the name of his paper deep into the metal of thousands of pennies, which coins he put into circulation through the wage-packets of his workers !

Lloyd wished to take a daily newspaper into his organisation, and, after long negotiations, he induced Pickburn to sell the *Clerkenwell News* for £30,000. That was a newspaper transaction of some magnitude in those days ; but the price was not extravagant having regard to the fact that the newspaper was earning a nett profit of £5000 a year.

With the change of proprietorship, the *Clerkenwell News*

became the *Daily Chronicle*, its news services were enlarged and it became an advocate of Liberal and Radical policies.

Veterans of London journalism tell some amusing stories of the ways of Fleet Street at that time.

Of the *Chronicle* it is said that, relatively early in the evening, a plan or dummy of the next day's issue was drawn up, and any story that came in after the dummy was made, had a poor chance of seeing the light of day. Bold enterprises such as are now called "scoops" were discouraged. They were suitable only to the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. If a reporter announced that his story was absolutely exclusive, and that no rival had secured it, he was told that he had given a very good reason why his masterpiece could await a later issue.

Still, the paper justified its purchase. It progressed, though not with rapid strides. At the time of the Boer War, however, it suffered a set-back.

H. W. Massingham, its editor of that period, a remarkable personality and a brilliant journalist, was opposed to the war. As a consequence of the policy which he propounded in the paper, the revenues and circulation of the *Chronicle* suffered so seriously that Frank Lloyd, to whom the paper had now descended from his father, was obliged to overcome his reluctance to interfere with the political judgment of the editor. The proprietor called for a less extreme policy. Massingham, like the courageous journalist he was, resigned rather than surrender his independence.

In the five years that followed, under the editorship of a Mr. Fisher, some ground was regained, but not until 1904 did the paper enter upon a period of prosperity.

In that year two important events occurred. Robert Donald was appointed to the editorship, and the price of the paper was reduced from one penny to a halfpenny, thus bringing it into the field occupied by such vigorous and enterprising journals as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily News*.

Circumstances now favoured the development of the Liberal press. A Conservative administration had been in

office for eight years, and the inevitable *sequelæ* of the South African War were accelerating the loss of popularity which every government experiences after a long period in office. The extent of that loss of support was to be revealed by the "landslide" election of 1906, in which Conservatives lost more than 170 seats.

But although the tide was running strongly in favour of Liberalism when Robert Donald took control of the *Daily Chronicle*, there were several Liberal newspapers eagerly exploiting the opportunity, and the success which the *Daily Chronicle* achieved would have been utterly unattainable without the application of the highest degree of journalistic skill and sound political judgment in its editorship.

Robert Donald, and the men he gathered about him, supplied the gifts which the opportunity demanded, and the newspaper was rewarded with material prosperity and immense influence in public affairs.

Of Donald's part in the progress of the *Daily Chronicle* a correspondent of the *Boston Transcript* wrote in 1915: "He has brought a big metropolitan daily through a critical transitional period in its history and has made it a power in politics and metropolitan life. Ten years ago, he was practically unknown."

As the paper prospered, Donald, too, prospered. August, 1914, found him established not only as editor of the *Daily Chronicle* and its old established ally, *Lloyd's Weekly News*, but also as Managing Director of United Newspapers Limited, the private company owning the two properties. Frank Lloyd and his two other colleagues of the board invested Donald with complete editorial control, subject only to the fundamental condition that the policy of the papers was to be Liberal. So far as the editor's powers as managing director were concerned, his service agreement with the company provided that he was to be "responsible for the control and direction of the business, with full power to appoint and dismiss employees . . . to enter into contracts for the

ordinary conduct of the business and generally do all things connected with the staff and the undertakings which in his judgment will be conducive to its success." It is unlikely that any journalist in Fleet Street had a position of comparable authority, unless, like Lord Northcliffe, he was the proprietor of the newspapers which he directed.

Such was the position of the *Daily Chronicle* in 1914 ; and it had achieved that position since the close of the Boer War.

Now another war menaced the future. There was no danger on this occasion that the *Daily Chronicle* would find itself on the unpopular side, for the Liberal Party was now in power, and while there were some members of the Government who would resign rather than countenance a war with Germany, Donald was not sympathetic to their view. On the other hand, he was not with those who considered war inevitable.

To within a few days of the declaration of war, Donald had hoped that the catastrophe would be averted. For several years his reluctance to believe ill of Germany had been strong almost to the point of obstinacy. In 1913, when Mr. Philip Gibbs<sup>1</sup> was disturbed by strong evidence of German intentions presented by several trustworthy men, Donald exclaimed, " Utter rubbish ! . . . Go to Germany yourself, and write a series of articles likely to promote friendship between our two peoples and undo the harm created by newspaper hate-doctors and jingoes. Find out what the mass of people think of this liar talk."

Undoubtedly, Donald allowed his intense will to peace to restrain the influence which the facts of the situation should have exercised upon the mind of so good a journalist. It was not that he had any pronounced affection for Germany. True, he was intimate with Haldane. But, on the other hand, he had married a daughter of France. He was neither pro-French nor pro-German. He was ardently, too ardently if that be possible, a lover of peace.

Even while the July ultimata were flying about Europe, he

<sup>1</sup> Later Sir Philip Gibbs. *Adventures in Journalism*.

accepted, and the *Chronicle* reflected, the view that Serbia had a bad case, which Russia was not likely to espouse ; and that, in any event, Great Britain's interest in the conflict was nil. This last consideration, he thought, made London the natural source of mediatory efforts.

But when, on Sunday, August 2nd, 1914, he drove to Fleet Street from his villa at Walton-on-the-Hill, it was impossible to see in London any affinity with The Hague or Geneva. The reservists, escorted by relatives and friends, crowded the streets on their way to the mobilization stations, and the atmosphere was heavy with a suppressed excitement such as London had not known since the days of the South African War.

Donald had now small hope that war would be averted. The previous day, in his garden at Walton, he had talked for a time with his neighbour, Mr. Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Government had just been informed that German troops had entered Luxemburg. Plainly, Germany meant to invade France *via* Belgium. With Belgian neutrality violated, Great Britain would have to do more than give support to France in the North Sea, which was all that Sir Edward Grey had, so far, promised to the French Ambassador.

Donald's conversation with Mr. Lloyd George had been cut short by a message summoning the Chancellor to his home, and Donald was left to continue the talk with his guest of the week-end, a personality no less interesting—Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. The leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party sat in a deck chair on the lawn, brooding. The news had a profound meaning for him. It was over Donald's telephone that he heard the news of the assassination of Jaurès, and over the same line he talked, later in the day, to Mr. Lloyd George, who pressed the Labour leader to return to London at once. In vain did Mr. MacDonald plead that there was no car available. The Chancellor countered him with an offer to send a car, and Donald's guest cut short his visit.

Talks with political leaders were a feature of Robert



Donald's week-end respite at Walton. On Saturdays, frequently, almost habitually, he partnered Mr. Lloyd George in a game of golf. The Chancellor preferred a foursome always, because it afforded better opportunities for talk. Opponents were drawn from a little coterie of political friends, several of whom had houses near the Heath. This group included Lord Reading, the Master of Elibank, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Reginald McKenna, Mr. Percy Illingworth (later Lord Illingworth), and Mr. C. F. G. Masterman. There were Fleet Street friends in the neighbourhood, too, notably Sir George Riddell (now Lord Riddell).

Of Mr. Lloyd George's play on these occasions, Donald has noted: "He made the result fairly certain by skilful preliminary work on the first tee. He was a persuasive negotiator for strokes. For bargaining purposes he did not rate his partner's performance over-high, and was quite modest about his own. Having laid a good diplomatic foundation, he entered into the game with great zest. His handicap was over single figures; he played a good steady game. But no silent golf for L.G. ! He chatted cheerily with whoever was near to him, and politics got mixed up with his golf."

If there had been no golf for Mr. Lloyd George on that Sunday afternoon in August, 1914, the international situation was not to blame. The Chancellor's religious convictions did not sanction the playing of golf on Sunday. He might walk the Heath with a friend, but, to quote Robert Donald again, "he kept a safe distance from temptation."

Evidently these week-end meetings did not give the Chancellor and the editor all they desired of each other's company, for frequently Donald was a guest at No. 11 Downing Street for breakfast.

In so far as Donald derived his political inspiration from Downing Street, it was from No. 11 rather than No. 10. Asquith had an ill-disguised contempt for the halfpenny press. It would seem, in fact, that he had little respect for any daily newspaper other than *The Times*.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was, happily for the Liberal Party, very different in his attitude to Fleet Street. He cultivated journalistic acquaintances, and developed a technique in the handling of the Press which ultimately enabled him to employ, with very great skill, any newspaper that might serve the purpose of the moment. But of all the journals with which he had transactions, open or covert, the *Daily Chronicle* was, for a long period, his favourite. That fact made inevitable his friendship with its editor. And although that friendship with Robert Donald exhibited all the characteristics of an intimate comradeship, there lingers a suspicion that self-interest was its basis.

It would seem that Mr. Lloyd George cared much for the editor and less for the man : at least such is the conclusion to which one is driven by later events.

In August, 1914, that friendship, whatever its real quality, appeared to be so close as to be beyond the possibility of disruption. There are some who believe that Donald knew even then that the friendship was not wholly altruistic. It is certain that he did not allow its existence to impair his independence of judgment, although Mr. Lloyd George's view of any public matter received from Donald, at this time, closer consideration than the opinion of any other man.

Whether it expressed Mr. Lloyd George's view or not, the statement made by the *Daily Chronicle* in the issue that went to press on the night of Sunday, August 2nd, is interesting.

"There can be no question," said the leading article, entitled *The Coming Armageddon*, "of our sending troops to the Continent, even if the half-dozen divisions we have for sending anywhere would make any difference in a war of six million combatants."

There was in the article, also, a passage which is of special interest to those who aim at maintaining peace by pacts of non-aggression. Appearing on the eve of war in a newspaper of strong pacifist views, this judgment represents the voice of

experience which cannot be ignored. "The events of the week," said the *Daily Chronicle*, "have illustrated the difficulty of deciding in a great war who is the aggressor."

At that time, the identification of the aggressor would scarcely have helped the peacemakers. Events had gone too far for war to be avoided.

Still, although the facts were hopeless, Donald refused to despair. As he glanced through the proofs of the paper, he saw, reflected in the leading article and in the presentation of the news, a glimmer of the optimism which he still cherished.

"Will England Declare War To-day?" was the ribbon headline that ran across the entire width of the front page. A paragraph towards the foot of the page showed that a pacifist policy is not incompatible with an academic interest in strategy, for here was an announcement that "to enable readers to follow the war news" the *Daily Chronicle* had in preparation a map which would shortly be put on sale.

Next day, Donald went to the House to hear Sir Edward Grey's historic survey of the situation. It impressed him so deeply that he caused a whole page to be devoted to the report of it, although the office was flooded with picturesque and sensational war news from all parts of Europe.

He had now no illusions. Neutrality was out of the question. Earlier in the day he had refused a page advertisement from a league whose aim was to maintain neutrality. Donald saw that, as a policy, neutrality was now dishonourable: so he refused to take revenue from it. But since the peace of the world was to be violated, let the world know plainly where the blame resided: and Grey's speech was admirable for that purpose.

Towards midnight, the master printer appeared in Donald's room with a proof of the front page of the next day's paper. Across the top of the page stretched the banner heading:

## BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY

To left and right headings ran across two columns

announcing that the ultimatum expired at midnight ; that the King had sent a message to the Fleet ; that the Navy and Army were ready ; that Lord Kitchener was at the War Office ; that the Government had taken over the railways and had annexed certain foreign battleships in the shipyards.

Donald handed the proof back to the master printer with a word of approval. This ritual of glancing over the page was completed swiftly, for the hour was past midnight, and the paper was behind its time-table. Hardly had the printer left the editor's room when there echoed through the building, amplified by the temporary wooden partitions which divided the dismembered premises from the new wing, the sound of singing.

The rattle of the batteries of the linotypes had ceased, and the rumble of the presses had not yet begun, so that in the pause between composition and printing, sounds of singing could be heard distinctly in the editorial rooms and corridors. The men were singing the National Anthem, just as the members of the House of Commons, led by the Labour Member for Woolwich, had sung it before dispersing that evening.

Forgetting alike the dignity of his office and the weight of his body, the master printer broke into a run. " Hell ! " he exclaimed as he disappeared, " I'll give them sing ! Think of it—singing, while we're missing trains ! "

In the editor's room, Robert Donald was clearing his desk of the litter of proofs that almost covered it. Now and then he paused to read one of these damp slips of paper. Here was the announcement of the *Daily Chronicle* news service dealing with the war. It detailed the correspondents engaged on the Continent, a catalogue remarkable for talent and comprehensiveness. Apart from the writers here advertised, men from the staff were on the way to Flanders to get as near to the war as their ingenuity and a very liberal supply of good British sovereigns would take them. (By some stroke of

genius a large amount of gold had been secured from the bank, even though the cashiers were paying only 10 per cent of each cheque in sovereigns.)

Here was the leading article, not Donald's work,<sup>1</sup> for he rarely wrote a leader, but certainly the expression, not only of his views, but of the spirit which had animated the policy of the *Daily Chronicle* under his editorship.

It bore the title "An Appeal to the British People," and after visualizing calmly but impressively the ordeal through which the country must pass, it called for national unity, for an obliteration of class differences and for a sense of kinship throughout the whole community in meeting the stern trials that lay ahead. The article continued :

This moral effort which alone can carry us through, is not to be had by boasting and shouting, by mafficking and drunkenness, still less by preaching windy hatred against the great peoples with whom an inscrutable Providence has brought us into collision. Let us respect ourselves and respect others. Let us show the world that a democracy can have dignity, and let us remember the precept, "Let not him that putteth on his armour boast as him that putteth it off." Last week the Kaiser told a shouting crowd in Berlin to go to the churches and pray. We might in our turn remember that admonition of true manhood. Clever ridicule is sometimes poured on the prayers which opposite combatants offer to the same God ; but the scoffers forget something which simpler people know. It is that in this world of unplumbed mysteries where frail, short-lived, short-sighted humanity gropes amid unmeasured forces, conflicts arise that are past our solving, or averting or reconciling. Human wisdom is sorely limited at its best ; but we believe that there is a wisdom beyond it ; and to that, in the tremendous hour

<sup>1</sup> The author of the article was Mr. R. C. K. Ensor, the chief leader writer of the paper.

when the resources of human providence have all been tried and tried in vain, we humbly commit our destiny, our lives and the lives of our nearest and dearest. We can only make this prayer, as we can only make any that deserves the name, in the spirit of sincere and self-forgetting resignation to duty—the spirit that alone can give honourable victory, alone can found lasting greatness, and alone can ennoble even the darkest defeat.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EVOLUTION OF AN EDITOR

**T**HOUGH by custom journalism is described as a profession, it has no accepted standard of qualification ; there is no prescribed course of apprenticeship or training. The attainment of distinction in the calling is fortuitous. There are no scaling ladders, and though some well-trodden paths of approach are apparent, no fences exist. An aspirant starts from any point of the educational or social compass, and finds a track where he may. Thereafter, his own ambitions, ability, and achievements are the factors that will determine his progress, subject always to his being favoured by a modicum of that which men call luck. Ability to write well is not, as some laymen suppose, a primary qualification. Academic distinction may be a serious handicap. So much is evident from the fact that few university graduates ever reach the editorial chair of a daily newspaper.

Having regard to the potent influence which journalism still exercises upon every aspect of social life and national development, it is astonishing that it should be an entirely open profession, one for which no kind of passport is essential, and that its code of professional conduct should lack legislative sanction. But such are the facts, and it is arguable that any effort to make journalism comparable to the more orthodox professions would make the journalist less amenable to his proprietor, and result in violations of the accepted rule that he who pays the piper is alone entitled to call the tune.

Had the way to journalism been protected by any fence whose gate could be passed only by the production of an

educational certificate, it is unlikely that Robert Donald would ever have entered the profession, for he was the son of poor parents whose means were equal to no more than elementary education for the boy. He confessed frankly, when he was president of the Institute of Journalists, "I am badly educated." He added with all the emphasis which a conscientious journalist would give to the assertion, "But I don't admit to being ill-informed."

Donald was born in Banffshire, at Auchidoun, and received his education in a parish school at Lismore, near Rhynie in Aberdeenshire. In his later years he spoke of the "long weary journey to school." There were then no buses for country scholars. "In sunshine, rain, sleet, or snow, we trudged miles over the rough country roads daily, with the prospect of sitting for hours on the hard, rudely constructed benches of the classroom."

His schoolmaster he described as "not very cultured, but tremendously conscientious, and a hard taskmaster." Despite his cultural deficiencies, Dominie Hutchinson may have been wiser than some of the modern and expensive directors of education. He solved the problem of dealing with a variety of intelligencies in a very simple way. He divided the boys into two categories. There were promising lads and there were laggards. To the promising scholars he devoted, almost entirely, his patience and limited gifts, and trusted to the rod to drive home such lessons as he was able to bestow upon the laggards.

He soon discerned in Robert Donald something that qualified him to sit with the lads of promise, and the boy responded to the master's painstaking efforts.

It would seem that at the outset of his career, Robert Donald cherished the hope of entering journalism, for, no sooner was he settled in his first job, as a junior clerk to a firm of horticultural builders in Aberdeen, than he began to teach himself shorthand. But ambition ran ahead of qualification. Before he had mastered the art, he had secured a



post as shorthand clerk to a solicitor, relying upon a retentive memory to make good the deficiencies of his shorthand.

His salary at this time was only fifteen shillings a week, which sum afforded no margin at all for the books which he desired to read in order to equip himself for journalism. But a youth who has not the resourcefulness to overcome a difficulty of that kind lacks one of the essential gifts of a journalist. Donald found a solution. He had a collection of books which he had brought with him when he came to Aberdeen. These volumes he took to a second-hand bookseller, proposing an arrangement whereby the bookseller was to exchange this small library for a similar number of books, and, when that second series had been read, to exchange it for another. The man agreed, and Donald was thus able to satisfy his voracious appetite for books, though he lacked the means to pay even the smallest library subscription. One book only from his original collection was excluded from this scheme, a popular educator entitled *Science for All*, which long survived in his library.

While he was still a clerk, Donald began his journalistic experience by contributing paragraphs to the *Aberdeen Journal*, but a time came when he felt that he might apply for a post on the staff. The chief reporter agreed to give him a practical test, along with another ambitious youth, Alexander Still. But it was made plain that they would receive no pay during the trial period. At the end of the experiment, the chief reporter announced that neither was worth engagement, even on the terms of the trial.

In point of fact, Aberdeen was full of young men who thought they were born for editorship, and the chief reporter of the *Journal* would appear to have hit upon an effective method of disillusioning them. But Donald once recalled with a smile that when he was editing the *Daily Chronicle* and Alexander Still was editing the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, the gentleman who had dismissed them both with a verdict so crushing remained the chief reporter of the *Aberdeen Journal*.



IN THE EDITORIAL CHAIR  
Robert D. Miller, Jr. file Dml 61-11



In his memoirs, *Gentlemen of the Press*, another veteran journalist who achieved distinction in London, Mr. W. Hutcheon, has offered similar testimony to the rigours of Aberdeen journalism. A few years after Donald's exit from the office of the *Journal*, Mr. Hutcheon was given the privilege of "frequenting" the editorial rooms of the *Aberdeen Free Press*. "The editor," he says, "never to my knowledge recognized my presence by so much as a nod, though later, when I was established in England, he was full of affability."

Because Aberdeen's production of embryo journalists was so much in excess of the demand, Donald, after his brief spell of "frequenting," looked south for his opportunity. On a holiday visit to Edinburgh he made the acquaintance of a man who "had a friend who knew a reporter on the *Edinburgh Evening News*."

The very next day Donald set out to track down the reporter. He turned out to be an Aberdonian, than whom, Donald used to say, there is no more clannish type of Scot. "I profited by the Aberdonian freemasonry," says Donald. Various recommendations were demanded, but they were forthcoming, and Donald was soon established as a reporter on the *Evening News*.

Of his work on that paper Donald once wrote: "There could be no better training for a young reporter." The office standard of professional skill was high, and the supervision was strict. Donald benefited by it. His observation of the work of others must also have been valuable in equipping him for the more responsible posts that he was to occupy later, for the *Evening News* had an unusually able staff, of whom perhaps the most notable was John M. Robertson, later to become a member of the Liberal Government between 1911 and 1915, and a Privy Councillor.

Necessarily, on the staff of such a paper, promotion is slow. Donald had set his heart on Fleet Street, and he was eager to gain the experience that would enable him to invade London with some prospect of success. He left the *Evening News* for

another newspaper, long since defunct, which had a much smaller staff and which might, therefore, afford him greater variety of experience.

There are indications that had Sir Robert Donald survived to write his memoirs he would have presented some interesting reminiscences of the Edinburgh of his day, but it is not the purpose of this work to deal exhaustively with its subject's early life or to dwell upon those incidents of professional graduation which can be described effectively only by the person who was intimately concerned in them.

Once launched in journalism, his career was relatively uneventful until he arrived in London. The years between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three were spent on the staffs of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, the *Edinburgh Courier*, and the *Northampton Echo*.

At Northampton, he was near enough to London to make an excursion to the metropolis, where he met a man named Nankeville who was conducting a paper for journalists called the *Reporter's Magazine*. But evidently this visit did not take Donald to Fleet Street. When he first trod Fleet Street, he came, not as a visitor, but as an invader. He had relinquished his work on the *Northampton Echo*, and had resolved to install himself in London journalism without preliminary negotiations.

He had always a preference for achieving his objects by personal visit rather than by correspondence. In that he was wise, for his letters were reminiscent of the Edinburgh days when he was required to reduce a column to a paragraph; they failed to convey even a hint of a rare charm of manner which he possessed and which, in a personal interview, always took him a long way towards his objective.

So, on a day in July, 1885, without preliminary letters, he walked into Fleet Street, his first mission being to collect the sum of two guineas owing to him by the *Evening Standard* for an article. Cynics will say that only a disturbance of phenomenal kind would distract the attention of a Scotsman

in pursuit of two guineas. But the truth is that Donald, as becomes a journalist, was more inquisitive than acquisitive, and his search for the office of the *Evening Standard* was interrupted by a scene of considerable commotion in the street. A crowd was surging about a news-seller at the corner of Salisbury Square, where, at that time, the *Daily Chronicle* had an advertising office. The incident had nothing to do with the paper which Donald was destined to edit. It arose from the fact that the first edition of the *Pall Mall Gazette* had arrived in the street. On the fringe of the crowd, by a coincidence that was not remarkable considering that the man was a journalist, Donald found the only person in London with whom he was acquainted, namely, Edward Nankeville. From him Donald had the explanation of the commotion. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was then printing W. T. Stead's exposure of the immorality of London under the title of "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon."

The story of how Stead revealed, with a frankness which shocked Victorian London, the ease with which young girls were procured for immoral purposes, and the extent of that foul traffic, is history which need not be recounted. Although Stead was conducting this crusade from the noblest of motives, the details with which he sought to arouse public indignation provided succulent fare for a very large section of the community. As Donald noted: "This excited crowd had gathered, not to make a demonstration for or against a reform, but to secure a piece of pornographic literature which discussed with amazing and brutal frankness," things not usually mentioned in print.

Nankeville knew all about the success of the "Maiden Tribute," for he was now on the staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. "We cannot print papers fast enough," he told Donald. At once the young journalist hinted that if the office were so abnormally busy, he might be able to relieve the pressure to some small extent. He told Nankeville how he was situated,

and together they went to the office of the *Pall Mall*, then located in Northumberland Street, Strand.

The turbulent scene of Fleet Street was repeated outside the publishing office. High above the heads of the crowd, in a window, Donald noticed "a fierce-looking fuzzy-haired individual," the great W. T. Stead, whose "journalistic outrage" had caused the sales of the paper to shoot up like a rocket from ten thousand copies per day to a total of six figures, a sale such as had never been attained by a London evening paper.

"The editor is invisible before noon. As time is short and visitors are many, the latter are requested not to waste the former." So said a notice in the entrance which Nankeville and Donald reached, after forcing their way through the clamant, empty-handed news-sellers around the door.

Being yet morning, the editor was "invisible." But the manager was available, and he offered Donald a job in the mailing department which was overwhelmed with orders for back numbers of the paper containing early instalments of "The Maiden Tribute." The job was to address wrappers, and the pay was £1 per week. It was hardly the sort of work for which Donald had come to London, but he was not the man to sniff contemptuously at an opportunity because it was small. It represented, anyhow, a place in the office of a London newspaper, and from that foothold something better might soon be reached. So Donald accepted.

His colleagues were "a lot of scallywags, beery out-of-work clerks," but he stuck to his new work for two days and then went to the manager, not to resign, but to suggest that perhaps he might be more usefully employed, remarking incidentally that he knew shorthand. As the manager's office was flooded with unanswered letters, the mention of shorthand proved to be the key to a new opportunity. Donald was promoted to the position of shorthand clerk to the manager, at a salary of £2 per week. "A hundred per cent increase in two days!" he reflected. "I was getting on."

The transition of Donald from the managerial to the editorial side of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was inevitable. A brother Scot whom Donald discovered while "exploring" the editorial department, provided the bridge by which the young man entered the reporters' room and secured a vacancy that happened to exist. His progress had been remarkably rapid. In seven days he had risen from addressing wrappers at a salary of £1 per week, to the dignity of a reportership at £3. The increased pay was not unimportant, but what pleased Donald more than the financial aspect of his progress was the fact that he was now on the editorial staff of a London newspaper, the head of which was the most famous editor in the world.

In his new duties, Donald's first assignment of each day was to report company meetings in the City, and his last was to take notes in the gallery of the House of Commons. But the most agreeable duty of the day intervened, for he spent a certain time daily with the great W. T. Stead, taking down in shorthand new instalments of the "Maiden Tribute."

Robert Donald was profoundly impressed by Stead. This tireless reformer exerted upon the young man an influence which, without doubt, had permanent effects upon Donald's character. What might have happened had not their earliest association been broken by Stead's conviction and imprisonment, it is impossible to say. But it is doubtful whether Donald would ever have become an indiscriminate disciple of Stead. He was too much in love with journalism, and while he never ceased to regard Stead as a master of the craft, he saw him as an evangelist to whom journalism was a form of preaching. Journalism was to Stead what the Salvation Army was to Booth—a means of conducting a great crusade. Donald felt that Stead would have been more at home in the Salvation Army but for the fact that not even the abnormal resources of Christian charity possessed by William Booth and W. T. Stead could have sustained for long a partnership of two such forceful personalities.



Though they were never again so closely associated, the friendship which was established when Donald acted as shorthand writer to Stead, lasted to the end of Stead's life. During Donald's editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* Stead was a frequent contributor, and though Lord Northcliffe claimed to have given Stead his last commission, it is possible that Stead carried with him also on his fateful voyage in the *Titanic*, a commission from the *Daily Chronicle*. There exists a letter written by Stead to Donald on the eve of his crossing, in which Stead offers to write articles on either the maiden voyage of the S.S. *Titanic* or on the mission which is taking him to America.

So lasting was the impression which Stead created upon Donald that at one time Donald appears to have contemplated writing a biography of Stead, to which end he accumulated a large amount of material. Though the memoir of Stead was never written, Donald was responsible for commemorating the "impossible fellow" in another way. In 1913 he organized and presided over the committee which erected a memorial tablet to Stead on the Thames Embankment.

Stead helped Donald forward, as, indeed, he helped many a young journalist. And in doing so he set Donald an example, for when Donald, in turn, became an editor, he never failed to display a sympathetic interest in all young aspirants. This virtue brought its reward, for he developed a faculty for selecting young men of unusual capacity, to the improvement of his staff. Robert Donald was never a boastful man, but late in life he derived much satisfaction from the fact that he had given to many men who subsequently attained distinction, their first appointments in London journalism.

Though he enjoyed acting as Stead's amanuensis, the part of Donald's first job which he valued most was his duty in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons. Here he mingled with many senior parliamentary journalists, chief among them being William Jeans, who represented *The Globe*

and whose copy was borne from St. Stephen's to the Strand office of the paper by a messenger on horseback.

Donald reported many of the famous parliamentary figures of that period, among them Gladstone, Chamberlain, Bright, and Parnell. Possessing from the first a flair for politics, it is surprising that Donald resisted the temptation to continue in so congenial a sphere as the Press Gallery, but he fought it successfully. His mind was set upon editorship, and he saw that specialization might be a hindrance rather than a help to him in that ambition. He decided to seek variety of journalistic experience, and to look for it even beyond the wide range of London journalism.

In his profession Donald exhibited always the chess master's gift of thinking ahead of the game. As will presently appear, he was always endeavouring to penetrate the future, and in some matters he was able to forecast developments with a degree of accuracy which no other prophet attained.

In the late 'eighties he appears to have realized that journalism was on the eve of great changes. He had small opinion of the craft as it was then practised. The London Press was then, he once said, the least progressive of all national institutions. It was still following the course it had pursued in the days when education was restricted to the few. It was ponderous, dull, and lacked enterprise. The reporter of the 'eighties he characterized as a "stenographic robot." He criticized the editors for their cloistered remoteness. Most of them hid themselves. They were hermits hedged about by impenetrable defences. Donald relates, as characteristic of the editors of his early days, that the butler employed by Mudford of the *Standard* once turned "a great statesman" from the door with the message that the editor of the *Standard* was at dinner.

Delane of *The Times* went everywhere, and so did Stead, who made it particularly his business to go where he was not wanted. For the rest, editors remained in their fastnesses,

catering for a population with which their contacts diminished every year. They devoted an inordinate amount of space to politics and foreign affairs. "They published columns on the oppression of some oriental race," wrote Donald, "and overlooked the misery that existed at their own doors. Misery at home was not news, and politicians had not yet made it politics."

In journalism no man gets far on a policy of safety first. Donald yearned for experience abroad, and because it was unlikely that any editor would send a man of Donald's age and limited experience to a foreign post, he decided to accept the hazards and to go to Paris as a free-lance. He obtained authority to call himself the correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but there was no salary attached to the title, and his pay was dependent upon the amount of acceptable copy which he sent to the paper.

On the eve of his departure came a letter from his editor, written from Holloway Gaol. "I am very sorry you are going to leave us," wrote Stead, "but I daresay that it is wiser for you to gain experience now." Then followed a homily upon the dangers awaiting a young man in foreign capitals, "where the eye which we fear a hundred times more than the eye of God, is no longer upon him."

Of the stern economies that were necessary to support him during his adventure as a free-lance in a foreign capital, and of the means by which he taught himself the French language, Donald has left no information. All he notes is that he occupied himself "chiefly in studying the French language and institutions." But an experience as agreeable as it was unexpected befell him in Paris. Its nature may be inferred from the fact that, four years later, he married Mlle Jeanne Garassut, the daughter of a distinguished scientific man.

He stayed in Paris for about a year, and then returned to London, prior to setting out upon a similar free-lance mission to America. Because there was no language to study in the United States, he appears to have concentrated his attention

upon the institutions of the country, foremost among them being the local government bodies and the great commercial trusts that were then growing up.

But the Atlantic was not broad enough to prevent him from hearing of an opportunity of advancement in London. He returned from New York to see Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who was then at work upon his project for a new evening paper for London, to be called *The Star*. The speed with which Donald tracked down the parent of the enterprise may be gathered from the fact that, when Donald reached him, the editor had engaged only one man for the staff of his unborn paper. That man was H. W. Massingham. Donald was O'Connor's second appointment. "He took me on trust . . . as a special correspondent, and turned me to cleaning the Augean stables of London's local government."

It is to be doubted whether any newspaper has ever been served, at one time, by so much journalistic talent as was *The Star* in the first years of its career. No fewer than eight of the men whom T.P. engaged, were destined for editorship. Massingham became editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, as also did Donald. Mr. Ernest Parke became editor of *The Star*. Lord Northcliffe chose Mr. Thomas Marlowe to edit the *Daily Mail*, and Mr. W. J. Evans to edit the *Evening News*. The sixth editor who graduated under O'Connor on *The Star* was Clement Shorter, whose name will always be associated with the success of the *Sphere*. The remaining two were Mr. Lincoln Springfield who founded *London Opinion*, and Mr. R. A. Bennett who became editor of *Truth*.

Then there were several gifted men who did not aspire to editorship, but who achieved great distinction in their own chosen spheres. Massingham introduced as a leader-writer at two guineas a week, a young Fabian named Bernard Shaw, who, when his leaders shocked the shareholders, became, on his own nomination, the music critic of *The Star*, writing (occasionally on music) under the pseudonym of "Corno di Bassetto." Seemingly the shareholders did not read the

musical notes, where sometimes, says Donald, "the only reference to music was in the title of the column." Of a visit to Shaw at his rooms in Fitzroy Square, Donald notes: "The only possessions which he had in abundance seemed to be a superfluity of footwear. He had enough to start a bootshop."

A. B. Walkley, the famous dramatic critic, was another colleague. In those days he was an official of the General Post Office, but he "covered" the theatres for *The Star* for a fee of one guinea per article.

A by-election in Lancashire brought to *The Star* some contributions of exceptional merit from a young man named Gordon Hewart, who had returned to his native county after a distinguished career at Oxford. This Mr. Hewart was invited to join the staff of *The Star*, and thus, for a time, a future Lord Chief Justice of England shared Donald's table, writing leaders and notes. Later, on Donald's recommendation, and upon the strength of a name that had a good Caledonian ring, Mr. Hewart was appointed London correspondent of the *Edinburgh Evening News*. But though exceptionally endowed as a journalist, Mr. Gordon Hewart had set his heart upon the Bar and politics, and Fleet Street lost him.

Succeeding Shorter as literary critic, came Richard le Gallienne, of whom Donald wrote: "Le Gallienne came to London from Liverpool, seeking to make his reputation as a poet. He was an attractive personality with well-moulded classic features, as delicate and refined as a woman's. When he published his *English Poems* he may have hoped to take London by storm, to repeat the Byronic precedent and become famous in a day. He reckoned without Bernard Shaw. G. B. S., or 'Corno di Bassetto,' was given the volume to review, and he simply scarified poor Le Gallienne. Among the cruel things he said was that Le Gallienne was the type of versifier who was longing for you to die so that he might enjoy the opportunity of mourning you in verse." Le

Gallienne made a gallant attempt at a neat rejoinder as follows :

" Poor little book that only yesterday  
Fluttered newborn in delicate array,  
How bruised and broken in the mud you lie !  
Surely some elephant was passing by :  
Or those mad herd of Galilean swine  
Have hoofed across that pretty page of thine.  
A nightingale the Minotaur hath torn,  
So seems my little murdered book this morn.  
Bury it gently where no eyes may see,  
And for its epitaph write C. di B."

Then there were on the staff of *The Star* such varied claimants to fame as Mr. Charles Hands, one of the most versatile and entertaining of journalists ; Joseph Pennell, the distinguished artist ; and an American reporter who subsequently wrote a successful musical comedy called *The Shop Girl*.

In the investigation of the corruption and mismanagement of London government, Donald was in his element, the more so because O'Connor did not handcuff his reporters. It was the declared policy of *The Star* to expose scandals, and O'Connor was not a timid, interfering editor. He chose his men with care and gave them the latitude essential to good work. He trusted them.

To his staff, O'Connor was confidant, as well as editor. Their relationship is well illustrated by a story related by " T.P." at a luncheon given to Donald in later years. " If I did not give Robert Donald his first job," he said, " I gave him one of his first jobs. And I did more. When I was consulted by a French gentleman about the young man who was paying suit to his daughter, never in my most flamboyant mood, in the heaping up of exaggerated adjectives which critics say is characteristic of my style, did I write such a eulogy as I did of Robert Donald." The monument to that " great article " was, he said, Lady Donald.

Two years after his marriage, Donald resigned from *The*

*Star* in order to capitalize his specialized experience of municipal government in a new weekly paper which he had conceived. Backed by Massingham and financed by leaders of the newly formed Progressive Party, Donald founded a weekly newspaper which he called *London*. The London County Council was then in its infancy, and a revolution was in progress in the sphere of local government. For once, Londoners were displaying a lively interest in civic affairs, which was not wholly surprising, having regard to the corruption and inefficiency disclosed by the Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Board of Works. In establishing *London*, Donald seized an excellent opportunity for exploiting public interest and for promoting a happier condition of government.

His first number of *London*, produced in February, 1893, evoked congratulations and good wishes from a company of notable people as varied as it was extensive. A. J. Balfour and H. H. Asquith (then Home Secretary) united to greet it. Charles Dilke thought it "excellent" and invited the editor to meet him at the House of Commons. Mr. John Burns had many suggestions to make, and Mr. Tom Mann, then secretary of the London Reform Union, was helpful in practical ways. Many were the notes from Members of Parliament, whose names are now forgotten, but who played a prominent part in securing the better administration of the metropolis. Finally, there was a post card from Mr. Bernard Shaw saying that his contributions to the paper must wait until he had finished a play to which he was devoting every spare moment. To write for *London* immediately would mean that he would kill himself, "for which I should expect at least £10 a column."

If the Londoner had continued to manifest the interest in his city which he displayed when Donald founded *London*, the paper would have prospered. At first, it made excellent progress, but with the coming of a better regime the Londoner relapsed into his old condition of apathy towards local government.

In the early days of *London*, Donald made the acquaintance

of a man who influenced his later career profoundly. That man was Frank Lloyd, the proprietor of the *Daily Chronicle* and *Lloyd's News*. To quote Donald's own account of this event, Frank Lloyd "came very gallantly to my rescue to maintain a small paper devoted to civic affairs. Mr. Lloyd took no part in public life. I had never met him. But he very kindly took the burden of that little propagandist paper upon his shoulders. It was an aggressive paper. I am afraid I have always been addicted to attacking vested interests and abuses—always in what I thought to be good causes. These attacks sometimes landed us in libel cases. Mr. Lloyd never grumbled; he never said a word; he stood by me. We won most of our cases, except a big one connected with the *Daily Chronicle* which I did not want to fight, and which the people on the other side did not want to fight. That, however, was a political matter."

When *London* disappointed his sanguine expectations, Donald was obliged to find another outlet for the major part of his energies. Massingham, now editing the *Daily Chronicle*, provided the desired appointment, and Donald became news editor of that paper. For about four years he continued in that capacity, until, in 1899, his career took its most unexpected and unorthodox turn. As the result of negotiations with a Mr. William Coxon, a director of Gordon Hotels Limited, Donald became publicity manager to that company.

Since 1899, the path connecting journalism and advertising has been well trodden; but at that time the art of publicity was not very highly developed, and the action of Gordon Hotels Limited in engaging a news editor from Fleet Street to direct its publicity was distinctly a novelty. Some of Donald's friends were surprised that he should leave journalism at a time when he had reached a position which was regarded as a stepping stone to editorship. Although, generally, Donald did not overrate the importance of money, the excellent salary that he was offered on this occasion may have been the decisive factor. According to the letter of appointment,



Donald was to receive a salary of £1000 per annum, plus "a commission on new business which should result in a large addition to your emoluments, the larger the better from our point of view." In 1899, £1000 per annum was, for a journalist, a princely income, and Donald's thousand was not all he received.

There was good scope for the publicity manager, for the company owned thirteen hotels. Four of them were in London (the principal being the Hotel Metropole), seven served important seaside resorts, and two were on the Riviera, at Cannes and Monte Carlo.

For about five years Donald held this post. The resourceful mind of the journalist was able to discern many new ways of directing public attention to the hotels. For writing, the post offered few opportunities, and they were mainly in the production of brochures. But there was scope for a more intelligent handling of advertisements, and in the production of hotel guides. Donald seems to have been happy and successful in his work, and to have had leisure for a good deal of free-lance journalism. He began to contribute to the magazines and reviews on his favourite subject of local government. Alfred Harmsworth commissioned him to write for the *Daily Mail* a series of signed articles on the great industrial trusts, both of Britain and America.

Although he was never a good business man in the acquisitive sense, Donald had an extraordinary gift for grasping the intricate details of company finance, and the processes by which companies preserve an appearance of independence while allying their fortunes to other concerns. He could trace the golden threads through a mass of interlocking companies with the confidence of a hound following a strong scent. No board of dummy directors ever concealed from him for long the real masters of a concern. This faculty, rare among journalists, made him an authority upon trusts, and early in the century his name appeared in many newspapers over articles dealing with industrial combinations.

Occasionally, too, he gave lectures on the subject. A paper on trusts which he read at the National Liberal Club was widely quoted and provided the text for a leading article in several newspapers both in London and the provinces. Thus encouraged, he delivered addresses here and there on local government, notably on the development of municipal trading which was then exercising the public mind.

Donald's experience of the platform was evidently agreeable to him, and it appears to have given birth to an ambition, short-lived and never re-born, to enter Parliament. His party lost no time in providing him with an opportunity of achieving his ambition, for in May, 1903, he is found addressing the Liberal Executive of West Ham (North), with a view to his adoption as Liberal and Progressive candidate for the division. Some little delay occurred in securing his adoption, because it was necessary for the Liberals to obtain the co-operation, or at least the acquiescence, of the Labour organizations.

In the meantime, Donald went through the usual experiences of a new parliamentary candidate, addressing meetings, both of the faithful and the unconverted, and of making himself pleasant at social functions.

In the end, unity was secured, and Mr. John Burns gave his benediction to Donald's candidature. But a more important, and certainly a more interesting commendation was that of Mr. Lloyd George, who wrote to wish " God Speed " to the new candidate. There never was a time, Mr. Lloyd George said in his letter, when the Liberal Party stood more in need of men of Donald's stamp. He was looking forward to the day when he would welcome his friend in the House of Commons as a representative of West Ham. And more : " This I know full well—that there is no one the House of Commons would listen to with greater respect and satisfaction on the great topics of the hour, for they love, above all, a man who is well-informed and can communicate his information with lucidity."

In January, 1904, Robert Donald was obliged to choose

between journalism and politics, between the editorial chair and a place in the House of Commons. The fact that West Ham (North) returned a Liberal at the next general election is proof that his place in the House was assured. The decision must have been one of some difficulty, for at that time Donald's interest in politics was hardly less than his interest in journalism. But whereas politics in those days did not concede the Member of Parliament even so much as a few hundred pounds a year for expenses, the editorship of a London morning newspaper offered far more political influence than was wielded by any Member of Parliament and, in addition, it carried emoluments that freed its holder from financial anxiety.

So when Frank Lloyd offered Donald the editorship of the *Daily Chronicle*, Donald accepted, and mollified the disappointed Liberals of West Ham by producing C. F. G. Masterman to take over the candidature, and by assisting him in his campaign. Masterman, of course, won the seat at the next election.

From the time that Robert Donald took the editorial chair of the *Daily Chronicle* the fortunes of the paper advanced without interruption. Donald was a well-trained journalist. He did not make the mistake of putting views before news. That is peculiarly the vice of politicians who acquire control of journals and who decline to be advised by journalists. Frank Lloyd was not of that genus.

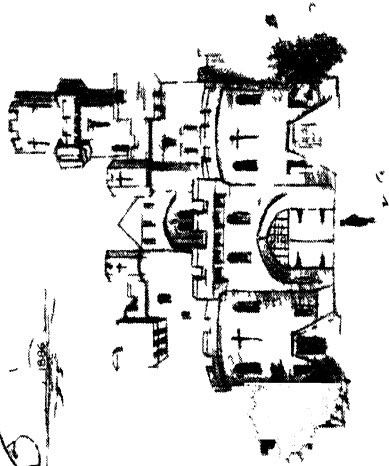
The *Daily Chronicle* made its reputation on its news and its features. People bought it because it was a good newspaper; and because it was a good newspaper it gained immense influence and was able to render great service to the political party it espoused.

Though Donald was primarily responsible for its success, he would have been the first to say that no single individual makes a newspaper, and that the *Chronicle* was made by many excellent men whom he induced to serve in his team. But good leadership is vital, and it was that which Donald supplied.

A New Year's  
Greeting



Let Him be glorified with blessings  
we can never stop glorifying you



"God ever my (and hath animated me with the  
oil of gladness above my fellows

from  
HOLLOWAY GALL

Thine & Ready

A NEW YEAR GREETING FROM W T STILAD



He had the gift, not only of enlisting capable craftsmen, but of evoking such a degree of loyalty that men of diverse temperaments worked harmoniously under his editorship.

Their names are of little public interest, but Donald remembered them all. His notes show that he knew the extent of their contribution to the success of the paper and that he appreciated each according to his talent and his character.

Foremost among them was Mr. Ernest Perris, who served as news editor throughout the fifteen years of Donald's regime, and who succeeded Donald in the editorship. These two men, Donald and Perris, constituted one of those rare combinations in which the one was always able to supply what the other lacked. They were complementary to an extraordinary degree, and each possessed more than an average love of adventure and an eager interest in every new manifestation of progress.

From 1904 to 1914 the *Daily Chronicle* marched with lengthening strides to the forefront of the newspaper world. Only the absence of a repetition office in the North of England prevented the paper from attaining the first place among morning newspapers with the largest sales. But that development was only delayed because Donald was averse from attempting it prematurely. He was not anxious to increase sales by reducing the earning capacity of the paper, which had been the result of the northern experiment of at least one rival. Further, the growth of the paper entailed demands for augmentation and replacement of plant, and for extension of premises, which it was wise to satisfy before embarking upon a northern adventure.

In 1906, the editorship of *Lloyd's Sunday News* was added to Donald's responsibilities, and in 1911 he was further appointed Managing Director of the company owning both papers.

The progress of the *Daily Chronicle* had been of considerable value to the Liberal Party. During Donald's editorship there were three general elections, in each of which the paper played an increasingly important part.

In the *Chronicle*, the Liberal programme had always a stout advocate, although the paper was entirely independent of party control and Donald was the sole interpreter of the broad Liberal policy which Edward Lloyd stipulated. More and more, Liberal Ministers entrusted the editor with their confidences, and found in him a well-informed and sagacious adviser. An honour might have been his had he felt able to accept such a distinction, but he discouraged the suggestion for various reasons, one being that he saw something incongruous in his acceptance of such a reward while the proprietor of the paper remained unrecognized.

A distinction of a different kind which was offered to him, and which he was very happy to accept, was the presidency of the chartered society of his profession, the Institute of Journalists. That honour is bestowed sometimes for distinction in journalism, and sometimes for reasons less obvious. Donald, whose editorial duties had left him with little time to serve the Institute, was elected unanimously to its presidency as an acknowledgment of his professional distinction.

Before his day, notable journalists had occupied the presidential chair, and there have been occupants no less distinguished since Donald's year of office. But none delivered a presidential address that aroused such widespread interest as that which he delivered to the annual conference of the Institute at York in 1913.<sup>1</sup>

In pre-war days newspapers generally were much less ready to discuss themselves than they are to-day, but Donald's presidential speech was something they could not ignore. He made it news, and, as a consequence, every daily newspaper appears to have reported it. Among Donald's papers survive many cuttings from the *Dominion* and *foreign Press*, showing that extracts from the address were cabled abroad freely.

The passage which aroused the greatest interest was that in which, speaking of the newspaper of the future, he predicted :

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Appendix.

People may become too lazy to read, and news will be laid on to house or office just as gas and water are now. The occupiers will listen to an account of the news of the day, read to them by much improved phonographs, while sitting in the garden.

That prophecy is so remarkably accurate that it is essential to emphasize the fact that it was made in 1913. How incredible it seemed at the time may be gathered from the report that the assembled journalists (who, after all, are supposed to have a little more vision than the rest of the community) greeted it with "loud laughter."

That laughter was echoed in some organs of the Press. Cartoonists and satirical versifiers found in Donald's "dream" a useful text. Even the *Manchester Guardian* headed the report, "Amusing Picture of What may Happen." A Lancashire leader writer who may have lived to hear the song of the nightingale broadcast, invited his readers to a guffaw at the thought of the notes of the first cuckoo coming out of the "newsograph" as the citizen of the future reclined in his garden chair or lay propped up in bed. One West-country newspaper displayed a shade of indignation at the idea of "the distribution of information, thought and opinion by means of a glorified gramophone." Admittedly developments in newspaper work were coming, but this was "grotesque"; and, "who shall say after this prediction that Scotsmen are lacking in imagination?"

But the sceptics were not all resident in the provinces. Speaking at a London dinner, Sir George Riddell (now Lord Riddell) said that Donald's prediction opened up an "awful prospect." He drew an amusing picture of the speeches of Sir Edward Carson and Mr. John Redmond getting mixed in the "pipe." For himself, he hoped he would never have to preside at the dinner of the Gas Pipe Makers and Liquid Speech Distributors.

But Lord Riddell has lived to lead a deputation of newspaper



proprietors urging the Postmaster-General to protest against the broadcasts of sponsored advertisements from foreign centres, and to preside over a board of the company that publishes the *Radio Times*.

Lord Northcliffe, however, did not scoff. He sent immediately a message of congratulation.

From Criccieth came a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer :

MY DEAR DONALD,

I feel I must write to congratulate you on the extraordinarily interesting speech you delivered from the chair. I read it in *The Times*, which gives an excellent report. It was simply first-rate, and contained a good deal of matter for reflection. . . .

Yours sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

Donald's presidential address aroused much discussion in the correspondence columns of the Press. A fortnight after its delivery, the *Westminster Gazette* was still publishing letters, many from well-known journalists and public men. The prophecy with which the popular Press made great play, was, of course, only a small portion of the speech. As an examination of the full text will show, it raised issues much more serious, such as the ownership of the Press and the precarious future of newspapers whose sales were small, but whose public influence was considerable and beneficent.

The publicity evoked by this presidential address caused the newspapers to give special attention to other speeches which Donald made as the mouthpiece of the Institute of Journalists though they were of small interest to the man in the street. An American commentator writing of Donald's presidency of the Institute said : " As in everything he does, he took hold of his job with an intensity of purpose which shook the old concern into new and vigorous life."

During 1913, much against his wish, Donald became something of a public figure. Though later in life, when he was concerned with interests which might be advanced by his becoming better known, Donald was not averse from the limelight, during his editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* he deliberately avoided it. It was a standing order of the office that his name was never to appear in the paper, except when he was acting in some capacity which made such a reference unavoidable, as in presiding at a meeting or making a presentation. No function would be reported merely because the editor was present. If he contributed an article it never bore his name. It was presented anonymously or as being written by "A Special Correspondent." But for the publicity given to his speeches as president of the Institute, Donald might have passed through most of his fifteen years of editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* without his name being known to any but the most observant of readers.

So far as the world at large was concerned, he elected to be an unknown *deus ex machina*. That, he felt, was the role most appropriate to the editor of a daily newspaper.

To-day different views govern editorial conduct, but such was the practice of most of the Fleet Street editors down to the outbreak of war in 1914.

## CHAPTER III

### FISHER OF THE ROYAL NAVY

TO be unknown to the world at large, but to be well known to those who directed the thought and the affairs of the world, was one of Robert Donald's aims as an editor. As has been noted, he criticized the editors of the 'eighties for their lack of contact with the world. To him it seemed a paradox that men who professed to be amplifiers of the voice of the public should spend their time in monastic solitude.

Such as these he called "writing editors." They considered that they could serve their papers best by devoting most of their time to the writing of ponderous leading articles. Donald held the view that writing was an unimportant part of an editor's duty. The production of editorial articles should be delegated, leaving the editor free to perform those duties which only he could discharge satisfactorily. Foremost among those duties he placed the maintenance of contact with leaders in every walk of life. By that means, and that only, could an editor keep himself well informed and fitted to formulate policy and to direct the operations of his staff.

For this vital work of liaison, Donald was well equipped. He was a man of striking appearance and great charm of manner. "Wherever he was, he would make a difference," James Milne has written. Though never a *bon viveur*, he was a good mixer. He could, and often did, lay the foundations of a long and friendly relationship in a few minutes' conversation at a crowded reception. He used his clubs, and joined every

society that appeared likely to bring him in touch with interesting and important people. If he declined an invitation to a public dinner it was usually because he had already accepted a card for another dinner on the same evening. It follows that he was not easily bored. He had, in fact, the art of dividing his attention, so that he might appear to be intensely interested in the prattle of a dull person, while the sensitive part of his mind was occupying itself with thoughts far removed from the subject of the conversation. The art is rare, but not unique. Some of its most able exponents are the parliamentary journalists whose duties require them to suffer bores gladly, for even a bore may sometimes, in the manner of an unwitting carrier of germs, be a vehicle of news whose importance he does not comprehend.

Donald's activities, however, were not those of a reporter, and no journalist was ever more scrupulous concerning the use of information he acquired as a guest or a friend. At times his standard of conduct in this matter was the despair of his staff. There was an occasion when, confronted with a rival newspaper which had scored a "scoop" with a story of a plot to poison Mr. Lloyd George, Donald remarked quietly, "Oh, yes; L.G. told me all about it at breakfast two days ago."

Possibly, on occasions, he was too meticulous, and withheld from his news department information which might properly have been used; but it was better to err on the side of discretion than to impair the confidence he enjoyed.

It may be wrong to describe as friendship a relationship established at the dictation of self-interest. Yet it is an interesting fact and a tribute to Donald's character and gifts, that many of those whom he first met as an editor became his friends. And if proof of their friendship were needed it was provided by the fact that, long after he ceased to control a daily newspaper, and when the forces of publicity at his command were negligible, many of those whom he first met as

editor of the *Daily Chronicle* remained attached to him, and he to them, by ties of genuine affection.

One of the most interesting men in Donald's circle of friends was the late Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet, who twice filled the post of First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

Early in his career, Fisher recognized the value of publicity. According to his biographer (Admiral Bacon) he never sought it, but he foresaw that, without the support of the Press, he was unlikely to secure the revolutionary reforms in naval affairs which it was his life's mission to bring about.

During the most fruitful period of Fisher's regime at the Admiralty, and again during his brief but vital term of war service, the Admiral cultivated the friendship of three influential journalists. One of them was Robert Donald, and to him Fisher opened his mind, and sometimes his heart, both in conversation and correspondence.

Their acquaintance appears to have begun soon after Donald became editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, and for a little time it remained the sort of friendly contact that any journalist would seek to maintain with any man occupying so important an office as that of First Sea Lord.

In 1908, when Fisher was about to accompany King Edward on the Royal visit to Kiel, and later to Reval for the famous meeting with the Czar, Donald is found commending to Fisher the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, "Mr. Morrison," he said, "has lived in Germany for many years. . . . He is very well-informed on German affairs, and very discreet." In contrast with some of Fisher's later communications, came the briefest of acknowledgments.

DEAR MR. DONALD,

All right.

Yours truly,

J. A. FISHER.

The formality of this note characterized their relationship for a time ; but not for long. Early in 1909, Donald's influence with Fisher was considered sufficient to make him the best person to approach the First Sea Lord with a request that the Press should be given facilities for witnessing some naval exercises at Portsmouth. The negotiations brought from Fisher a letter in which the Admiral enclosed a piece of his blotting-pad. Scrawled across it in pencil were the words, " See Donald about June 12." In the accompanying note he explained, " This bit of blotting-pad, a week old, tells you I have not forgotten. I have worked out all details, but don't want to disclose them yet."

A later note on the same subject is interesting by reason of its hint of the Fisher-Beresford quarrel which was then reaching a climax. " Don't imagine," he writes, " that I am forgetting June 12, but I am *frying other fish* just now." He closes the letter thus :

" Yours till the angels smile on us." (They are not doing so at present !)

J. F.

Shortly before June 12th, the attack upon Fisher by Lord Charles Beresford had become so notorious that a Cabinet committee, with the Prime Minister as chairman, had been set up to investigate the complaints which Beresford had made against Fisher's administration at the Admiralty. The constitution of the committee and its procedure were causing intense annoyance to Fisher. On June 3rd, 1909, he wrote thus to Donald :

DEAR DONALD,

Forgive pencil and haste to thank you for your approval. Pray for a fine day ! I am to be ruined publicly and privately, but I've determined not to say

one word whatever may be said—*I am not going to advertise the advertisers.*

“ You common people of the skies,  
What are you when the moon shall rise ? ”

(Sent me yesterday, written in 1568.)<sup>1</sup>

Yours,

J. A. FISHER.

3.6.09.

On the Admiral's "determination" to keep silence, however, an interesting sidelight is thrown by Admiral Bacon's biography. Far from being Fisher's own desire or resolve, it appears that "Mr. McKenna extracted a promise from Fisher that the latter should keep complete silence unless directly addressed by a member of the committee; as he feared that the anger of the Admiral at Beresford's mis-statements might lead to the harmony of the inquiry being rudely interrupted."

From the time when Fisher relinquished his appointment, in 1910, down to the outbreak of war in 1914, there appears to have been little correspondence between Donald and the Admiral, who spent much of this period in travelling. One of the most interesting documents is a copy of a long letter written by Fisher to Mr. Churchill in 1912, in which Fisher expresses in trenchant style his disapproval of Mr. Churchill's choice of officers for certain high commands in the Fleet, and in which he says: "I fear this must be my last communication with you in any matter at all."

Ostensibly, Fisher had no political partiality. When he entered the House of Lords, he took no party label. But in his correspondence with Donald there is evidence of Radical tendencies. He viewed with misgiving the efforts of the King to bring about an understanding in the Irish crisis of March,

<sup>1</sup> From a poem by Sir Henry Wootton (1568-1639):

You meaner beauties of the night,  
That poorly satisfy our eyes  
More by your number than your light,  
You common people of the skies;  
What are you when the moon shall rise?

1914. These methods were, he complained, "unconstitutional." The appearance of the Primate at a conference on the subject aroused his ire. "What the hell has the Archbishop of Canterbury to do with this job?" he demanded in a fiery letter to Donald. In another note he denounces as a "rotund cad" an individual whose "sole object has been to vilify the Liberal Party . . . carrying damnable tales to the detriment of good men and true now in the Government, and especially against McKenna." Fisher's loyalty to Mr. McKenna, however, was not due to political sympathies so much as to his appreciation of Mr. McKenna's courageous support of the Admiral at the time of the Dreadnoughts controversy.

By November, 1914, Fisher having now been recalled to his old post at the Admiralty, asperities disappear from his correspondence—at least for a time. He is now thoroughly pleased with the world, and "My dear Donald" becomes "My beloved Friend," in a note in which Fisher thanks the editor for his "kind support." After expressing the hope that Donald and his wife will often come to lunch when he and Lady Fisher are installed at Admiralty House, he continues :

We have roped in Sir A. K. Wilson, but don't allude to it at present. He has written a nice letter, which has greatly pleased the Prime Minister, that he intends to be "Fisher's slave !!!"

I worked 22 hours out of the 24 yesterday! But 2 hours sleep is not quite enough, so I shall slow down gradually! I shall have some lovely episodes to relate to you!

Yours always,

1.11.14.

FISHER.

The hope that Donald would be a frequent visitor at Admiralty House was not fulfilled; Fisher's second term of office, ending in the violent quarrel with Mr. Churchill over the Gallipoli campaign, lasted only seven months.

His departure made history. It brought down the Liberal



Government, and, in the crisis, the first Coalition was born. Whether Fisher's resignation was shrewdly timed to have the effect it produced, it is difficult even now to say. He was sufficiently astute to bring about such a *coup*. On the other hand, there is enough evidence to support the theory that he resigned simply because his position had become untenable ; and that he acted without reference to the political situation, and without regard to the bitter hostility with which the Opposition then viewed Mr. Churchill.

Fisher wrote subsequently to Donald : " I sent Asquith to bed ! You didn't know that !!! "

The Admiral may not have intended the expression to be taken literally. At all events, the immediate effect of Fisher's resignation on Asquith was not so disabling. Believing, erroneously, that Fisher had left London without waiting for the acceptance of his resignation, Asquith sent him a melodramatic note ordering him, in the King's name, to return to his post. Fisher returned (voluntarily, from Westminster Abbey, where he had been attending Matins) and for a few days he remained, nominally, First Sea Lord. During those few days Fisher ruined what seems to have been a substantial prospect of remaining in office, under a new Minister, by presenting to the Prime Minister an ultimatum demanding, as the price of his continuance in office, autocratic powers over the Navy and complete control of the war at sea. When Asquith had completed the difficult business of forming the First Coalition Government, he sent to Fisher a letter of one sentence accepting his resignation.

On the day when Fisher's hopes were thus destroyed, the Admiral wrote thus to Donald :

MY BELOVED DONALD,

I never forget a friend, and never forgive an enemy.

Yours till Hell freezes,

22.5.15.

FISHER.

Then he added a postscript inviting Donald to lunch with him, "when this crisis is over."

That large section of the public to whom Fisher was a hero, felt that the Government had made a profound mistake in letting Fisher go. Of course, nothing was known by them of the ultimatum which had made his retention impossible, and for a long time the hope was extensively cherished that the Government would recall Fisher. The Admiral, however, professed to recognize the finality of the position. Writing from Scotland on June 5th, 1915, he tells Donald :

People think I am coming back soon, *but I foster no illusions !* The conditions which are essential to success in sea war are too hard for the politician. *I asked to be un-trammelled—I was refused. . . .*

Some friend anonymously sent enclosed cutting. Please return and burn this letter. The bitter thing is I have prepared a big Armada of new vessels from huge to tiny and no one but myself will know exactly how to use them.

Yours,

FISHER.

5.6.15.

In reply, Donald said :

I have been discussing the situation with good friends of yours, and they seem to be inclined to the opinion that the conditions in your memorandum upset the Prime Minister and stopped negotiations. There is a general impression amongst the public, and also politicians, that we will see you at the Admiralty again.

Fisher, it will be remembered, was induced within a few weeks of his resignation to take the chairmanship of the newly established Board of Invention and Research. The motive, no doubt, was to furnish the public with the consoling thought that their man of genius was still serving the

country's cause. Actually, the post was one that might have been filled adequately by a man of less exceptional gifts. The personnel of the Board were men of great distinction and, as Fisher wrote, his function was well expressed by the couplet :

I have culled a garden of flowers,  
Mine only is the string that binds them

Fisher was not happy in his new role. As a close friend wrote to Donald, "It is nothing short of criminal that our greatest sailor and strategist should be kept unemployed while in his prime, for the Board of Inventions gives nothing like scope to his energies." In proof that Fisher was "in his prime" his friend added the information that one of the two doctors who had overhauled the Admiral recently and independently, had remarked that a man of fifty might envy his arteries, while the other doctor had pronounced his physique to be that of a man of forty.

Early in 1916 Fisher wrote to Donald, evidently in reference to a short and dignified statement he had made in the House of Lords in reply to a criticism by Mr. Churchill :

How always personal attacks rectify themselves *if you leave them alone*. Beresford goes for me to-night. Let him go ! Never throw stones at a yelping cur. He only yelps all the more.

Yours for evermore,

FISHER.

When Donald mentioned a talk he had had with the new First Lord, Fisher replied on 5th April : "I wonder if you got anything out of Balfour as to the 100,000 tons of shipping sunk by German submarines between March 1st and April 2nd ?"

The effect on Fisher of such tidings can be imagined, the more so when it is recalled that the request of his Inventions Board for a submarine for experimental purposes was refused on the plea that a submarine could not be spared.

Shortly afterwards, inspired by the belief that he might be recalled to his old post, Fisher sent to Donald what he called a *jeu d'esprit* with a whimsical suggestion that Donald should publish it, adding: "Don't let out I wrote it. I'll haunt you if you do!" Here is the document:

*An intercepted letter from Lord Fisher to Grand Admiral Von Tirpitz on his sudden dismissal from the German Admiralty:*

DEAR OLD TIRPS,

We are both in the same boat! What a time we've been colleagues, old boy! However, we did you in the eye over the Battle Cruisers, and I know you've said you'd never forgive me for it when bang went the *Blucher* and *Von Spee* and all his host!

Cheer up, old chap! Say "*Resurgam!*" You're the one German sailor who understands war! Kill your enemy without being killed yourself. I don't blame you for the submarine business. I'd done the same myself only our idiots in England wouldn't believe it when I told 'em!

Well! So long!

Yours till Hell freezes,

FISHER.

29.3.16.

*P.S.* I say! Are you sure if you had nipped out with your whole High Sea Fleet before the Russian ice thawed and brought over those half-million soldiers from Hamburg to frighten our women, that you could have got back un-Jellicoeed?

R.S.V.P.

Whether the belief that he would be recalled was responsible for Fisher's inability to accede to a request which Donald put to him is not evident; but it would seem that, after the Battle of Jutland, Donald wished him to introduce

the late Harold Begbie, then a special correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, to the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet. Said Fisher: "I would love to do it for his own sake, but you will see the reasons why I can't write to either Jellicoe or Beatty at present owing to bigger causes."

His feelings towards Sir John Jellicoe he disclosed in a letter to that Admiral later in 1916, and of which he sent a copy to Donald. It would not be proper here to reveal the contents of that communication, but one may perhaps be allowed to quote one innocuous but amusing passage:

He (Hindenburg) sent those ten German destroyers later to Boulogne and Folkestone a few days after the German Emperor gave him authority over the German Fleet when naval officers thought it *madness*—just as Napoleon succeeded, or as Nelson succeeded when both were voted mad, and King George made the classic rejoinder to Admiral Sir John Orde that he wished to God Nelson would bite some of his Admirals.

Fisher's position at this period was one which any man would find exceedingly irksome. He not only believed that he was the one sailor who could direct naval policy aright, but he was equally convinced that he could bring a speedy and complete victory to the Allied arms. Yet the leaders of the country would not call him into consultation, or give him a post in which his gifts could find adequate expression. The public still had immense faith in him. His popularity must have been the envy of many a politician. But none of the keys he held—his remarkable record, his undeniable genius, or the confidence of a large section of the public—could open the door to high appointment.

Small wonder, then, that his correspondence exhibited an increasing degree of bitterness.

A long memorandum which he sent to Donald (undated, but written, probably, towards the end of 1916), indicates

Dear Donald

You take the cake in  
the Chronicle this morning!

(N.B. I have just increased your  
circulation by ordering a hundred  
copies for myself!)

You got the exact right people  
to write! You tell hell freezes!

Kindly send enclosed  
to Bertie

J. A. Fisher  
14.6.09

FROM THE FIRST SEA LORD

A characteristic note from Admiral Sir John Fisher (later Lord Fisher).



Balfour's administration of the Admiralty under the title of "The Six Big Balfourian Blunders." Fisher gives what he claims to be examples of Unimaginative Strategy, Futile Foreign Intelligence, Futile Ship-Building Policy, Inadequate and Foolish Blockade, Inefficient Mine-laying, and sixthly, the Ignoring of the Baltic Project (Fisher's favourite plan) for landing an invading force on the Pomeranian coast, eighty miles from Berlin.

The first Coalition was now nearing the end of its days. Those who were intimate with the political situation were aware that soon, by some means as yet unforeseen, a new War Cabinet, in which Asquith would have no vital part, would come into being, with the sole aim of prosecuting the war with the utmost vigour. A new body with such an aim might be expected, as one of its first steps, to summon to its aid the man who had staged the one completely successful action at sea, and who was full of plans for bigger and even better victories.

It is revealed<sup>1</sup> that, at this time, Fisher had arranged to make a speech of seventeen words in the House of Lords. He submitted the seventeen words to Mr. McKenna, who, however, dissuaded Fisher from making the speech on the ground that it would have a fatal effect on the Allies. Mr. George Lambert, M.P., Fisher's old friend, is of opinion that if the Admiral had made the speech, "it is probable that Lord Fisher would have been backed by Lord Northcliffe as First Sea Lord." And at that time Northcliffe was exceedingly powerful.

Unfortunately, the seventeen trenchant words which might have had this dramatic effect are not, apparently, on record. But there survives among Robert Donald's papers this cryptic document written by Fisher. (The introduction would appear to have been addressed to Mr. McKenna, the censor of the seventeen words.)

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Fisher*, by Admiral Bacon.



*Another* proposed Speech, more vile than the one you vetoed on Nov. 9th, 1916. Do you veto this one ? R.S.V.P. !

The First Sea Lord has quite recently made a carefully prepared public statement at the Fishmongers' Hall that the German Submarine Menace is more serious now, at this moment, than at any previous period of the war. Without doubt he is right. He infers that so far it is not yet being coped with. *It is not !* That is a fact. The Germans state (and it cannot be denied) that they are launching new German Submarines three times quicker than we kill theirs ! Also they prove that they sink more shipping than we build—over 800 ships have been sunk in the last six months. This is official. Have we built 800 ? The White Star *Britannic* was 50,000 tons, and so on ! What follows ? The British Empire and the German submarine cannot co-exist—one or other must shortly be destroyed. This Menace which now confronts us requires INSTANT BIGGER ACTION and GIGANTIC PUSH !

### THE EMPIRE IS IMPERILLED !

NOTE.—We have it officially that the German Military authorities have ordered the release from the Front of all skilled mechanics. These have been sent to the Ports where German Submarines are being “*built feverishly*,” and 300 engines for German Submarines have been recently procured from Switzerland ! *Are we releasing ship mechanics and getting engines ???*

It would appear that for some time afterwards Fisher's mind was framing frank statements for the House of Lords, one of which he submitted to Donald. So much is to be deduced from a letter dated February 7th, 1917, and the letter is noteworthy because it shows, as Mr. Lambert suspected three months previously, Fisher was in touch with Lord Northcliffe. The Admiral wrote to Donald :

I shall follow your advice and *not* make the speech though so urgently pressed by Northcliffe and others.

While in Fisher's mind hope and disappointment alternated with the changing tide of events, and while he composed pungent speeches which were never to be delivered, he received a birthday note from Mr. Churchill. It was a generous, graceful message. There was no reference to the Admiral's age; merely a well-turned phrase about his perennial youth and vigour. But what seems to have moved Fisher to a cynical smile was a sympathetic comment upon the absence of any naval operations in the Baltic, whose prospects Mr. Churchill seemed now to regard with favour. Fisher sent a copy of the letter to Donald with a footnote:

The lovely part of this is that Winston blasted my plans for this Baltic operation by pressing the Dardanelles. This blasted me, and I remain blasted.

By March, 1917, the Admiral appears again, and finally, to have renounced hope of recall, for he writes to his "beloved Donald," thanking him, no longer with the old exuberance, for some service he has rendered, in terms which, coming from Fisher, have a muffled, despairing note. He continues:

Lord Rosebery took me for a walk to comfort me and thinks Meux's speech vulgar and that it will recoil on himself. *But the Tories cheered him!* The German submarines are not yet being dealt with. . . . But a far bigger menace is any disaster or *drawn battle* in the North Sea, owing to Jellicoe's withdrawal by Balfour to prop himself up! Hindenburg will then launch half a million men on the banks of the Thames and you'll have a second Austerlitz! That will certainly end the War!!!! *The Germans have more troops now than at any time in the war.*

I went for a walk with Lansdowne yesterday, he fears

this retreat of the Germans on the Western Front is a *deadly trap ! This is private ! He is intensely anxious !*

Yours for evermore,

F.

1.3.17.

In March, 1917, on the abdication of the Czar and the establishment of the Kerensky regime in Russia, Donald invited Fisher, in common with other public men, to send a message, *via the Daily Chronicle*, to the Russian people. The request must have been a little embarrassing to the Admiral. During King Edward's visit to the Russian Fleet in 1908 Fisher was much in the company of the Czar and his consort, and is believed to have been responsible for King Edward's action in appointing the Czar to the honorary rank of Admiral of the Fleet in the British Navy. Fisher, however, turning a Nelsonic eye upon the deposed Czar, contrived to become enthusiastic about republicanism, but not about the Russian variety. He wrote :

I've struggled to respond to your desire for a rousing telegram to the Russian people, but I couldn't evolve anything good enough beyond "*Stick to it ! ! ! And the Hohenzollerns will go next and so end the war !*"

I tell you solemnly that if every newspaper and every public man and all our Allies *with one voice* say to the German people : "*We will never make peace with Hohenzollerns*, the German people would *then* have a revolution much easier than the Russian. *We would have a German Republic ! ! !* The German soldiers are sick to death of the war and the German homes are crying for peace.

That Lord Northcliffe was sometimes a correspondent of Fisher about this date is plain from certain phrases in the next two letters. On April 21st, 1917, Fisher wrote to Donald :

I must send you a line to tell you how great an effect your article on the Admiralty has produced. Northcliffe put it whole into the *Weekly Dispatch* and *Daily Mail*. The question is "*Can the Army win the war before the Admiralty loses it?*" McKenna told me yesterday (he telephoned to me to see me) that the German submarine menace is increasing. The figures officially given are most misleading, but even at that the destruction of our shipping is prodigious and famine is near us, and the country at large is not yet alarmed. *Repetition is the soul of journalism. Say it again!* If you got rid of Carson you'd settle Ireland as well as the submarine menace.

Yours always,

FISHER.

Late in April Fisher has recaptured his old quarter-deck spirit. Pleased with certain leading articles in the *Daily Chronicle*, he dashes off a note to Donald with much use of a red pencil to impart emphasis to certain passages :

MY BELOVED DONALD,

Your broadsides are hitting between wind and water !!! *You are the one man with courage !!! Go on and prosper. Repetition is the soul of journalism ! The War Cabinet is frightened and well it may be ! " Can the Army win the war before the Navy loses it ? " That is the question.*

Yours for evermore,

F.

There were at this period critics who dismissed the veteran sailor with a gesture or a word that implied madness. His biographer has faced that issue and has disposed of it. Nevertheless, it is interesting to read the following letter from Fisher to Donald in the light of that slander. Writing on March 27th, 1917, he says :

Permit me to congratulate you on your excellent leading article in the *Daily Chronicle* of yesterday and also on the excellence of your War news! *You are ahead of them all!*

It has been a most disastrous war for one simple reason that our Navy with a sea supremacy quite unexampled in the history of the world (we are 5 times stronger than the enemy) has been relegated into being a subsidiary service. (It was so quite accurately described recently in the House of Commons by Sir Ivor Phillips, M.P.) Our blockade of the German coast was a farce due to the ineptitude of the Foreign Office, and our military authorities failed to understand the military mind of Frederick the Great who stated that the Baltic coast of Germany was Germany's vulnerable point (her one weak spot) and geography has not altered since his day, and the Pomeranian coast in the Baltic is still only 90 miles from Berlin. For the only time in his life Frederick the Great was frightened and lost heart when the Russian Army landed on the Pomeranian coast and he sent for a bottle of poison, but that night the Russian Empress died, and peace came and he was saved!

Mr. Lloyd George's speech of "*14 times too late*" still holds the field in its acumen and its truth! Our Navy is in "cotton wool" at Scapa Flow. When it acts it will be now "too late."

What crashes we have had!

Tirpitz—sunk.

Joffre—stranded.

Kitchener—drowned.

Fisher—marooned.

Lord French—made a Viscount.

Lord Jellicoe—do.

Lord Davenport—do.

Sir W. Robertson—the Eastern Command in Timbuctoo.

Bethman Hollweg—torpedoed.

Asquith—torpedoed.

von Moltke— do.

Falkenhayn— do.

Admiral von Pohl, the Commander of the German  
Fleet—committed suicide !

Heaven bless you ! I am here walking 7 miles a day,  
and eating my heart out !

Yours always,

FISHER.

After this letter, there was silence for a time. But the Admiral was not idle. He was using his pen to urge upon the Prime Minister a more vigorous policy, not only at sea, but in the air. Whether the letters were sent is not clear, but Donald received copies of them.

Throughout his correspondence with Donald, Fisher seems never to have addressed him at his office. Always the letters were sent to Donald's town house, in Taviton Street. Sometimes the envelopes were heavily sealed. At first, the Admiral was given to heading his letters " Secret," " Confidential," or " Burn this when read " ; but later, as he came to know that he could trust Donald implicitly, these injunctions disappeared.

In the late summer of 1917, Fisher resumed the correspondence. Writing from Swanage on August 22nd he says :

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I've not written you or seen you for ages ! I am here at the above address scanning the dark horizon for some faint glimmer of the end of the war. *Not a sign of a glimmer !* So far as the Germans are concerned there is indisputable authority for stating that Germany is equal to a seven years war. *Are we ?* So far we have had no Nelson, no Napoleon, no Pitt ! The one only victory of ours in war (and as Nelson has said, it was not a victory—it was annihilation !), was the destruction of Admiral

Von Spee's Armada off the Falkland Islands which saved Africa. He was en route there to gobble up our Cape Squadron as he had gobbled up poor Admiral Craddock's precisely similar squadron of ships, and Botha's fifty transports going to S.W. Africa would have gone to the bottom ! And the above accomplished under the sole direction of a septuagenarian First Sea Lord who Jellicoe and all else thought mad for demanding the Grand Fleet of our fastest Battle cruisers to send them 14,000 miles on a wild goose chase ! And they arrived as Von Spee arrived, almost to the minute ; and not many minutes afterwards, his Armada was at the bottom of the sea, and our Battle cruisers that did the job had not a single man killed or wounded ! And yet how I was execrated for inventing the Battle cruisers ! " Monstrous Cruisers " they called them !

To this day Beresford and others of his kidney calumniate them and their still more wonderful successors ! How would they have saved England without them ? Our nitrate trade to Chili and Peru and therefore our munitions were in Von Spee's hands.

We have no poet now like Warburton describing the Battle of the Nile ! Von Spee blowing up like another " Orient " and his son with him *a la Casabianca* !

And yet, dear friend, what comes to the author of the scene ? The words of Montaigne,

*Qui de nous n'a en sa terre promise,  
Son jour d'extase,  
Et sa fin en exil ?*

Yours for evermore,

FISHER.

A week after writing this letter, the Admiral was in London, and the purpose of his visit is revealed to Donald in this letter :

I'm too late to see you this journey. Sir Eric Geddes asked me to come up and lunch with him and opened all

his heart. He was very cordial, indeed affectionate, I might say, but he apparently thinks me impossible anywhere. He was much tickled at my telling him in reply to a question that the whole art of war was surprise, begotten out of Imagination by Audacity, and no such copulation had yet taken place except in the solitary instance of the Battle of the Falklands when Von Spee said as he saw the battle cruisers, "Oh! What a surprise!"

Bless you,

Yours,

F.

I go back to the country day after to-morrow, as Geddes has sucked me dry.

During this summer, Donald received from Fisher the most unusual of all the Admiral's communications. It was a sermon on the English Bible! The circumstances in which the sermon was written were explained by its author in a covering note. A rich American woman, he said, had asked him to write it for her grandson who, after serving in the British forces, was lying in hospital, wounded. "She might have asked an expert," added Fisher, facetiously—"an Archbishop or a Dean, and sent him a fat fee: all she sent me was her love."

It will be agreed that, fee or no fee, an Archbishop or a Dean would have been much more expansive, but it is doubtful whether either would have produced a treatise so readable, or so well adapted to its purpose. The following is an exact reproduction:

### THE ENGLISH BIBLE

John Wycliffe, in A.D. 1380, began the translation of the Bible into English. This was before the age of printing, so it was in manuscript. Before he died in A.D. 1384, he had the joy of seeing the Bible in the hands of his countrymen in their own tongue.



Wycliffe's translation was quaint and homely, and so idiomatic as to have become out of date when, nearly two hundred years afterwards, John Tyndale walking over the fields in Wiltshire, determined so to translate the Bible into English "that a boy that driveth the plough should know more of the Scriptures than the Pope," and Tyndale gloriously succeeded! But for doing so, the Papists, under orders from the Pope of Rome, strangled him and burnt him at the stake. Like St. Paul, he was shipwrecked just as he had finished the Book of Jonah, but there was no whale handy and he was cast ashore in Holland.

Our present Bible is almost word for word the Bible of Tyndale of A.D. 1530, but in A.D. 1535, Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter, was directed by Archbishop Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell (who was Secretary of State to Henry VIIIth), to make a fresh translation, and he beautified Tyndale's original. Cranmer and Cromwell both suffered death because of their Bible business, and Coverdale was deprived of his Bishopric and died of hunger in the City of London.

In 1539, "*Divers excellent learned men expert in the foresaid tongues*" (Hebrew and Greek) made a true translation of the whole Bible which was issued in 1540 and remained supreme till 1568, when the Bishops tried to improve it and failed! And then, A.D. 1607, the present Authorised Version, issued in A.D. 1611, became the Bible of the Land, and still holds its own against the recent pedantic *Revised* Version of A.D. 1884. No one likes it.

In the opinion of Holy men, Cranmer's Bible (as it is called) or "the Great Bible"—the Bible of 1540 to 1568 holds the field for Beauty of Language and the emotional rendering of the Holy Spirit. A great Atheist said: "There may be some doubt whether the Hebrew and Greek writers of the Original Bible Manuscripts were

inspired or not ; *there can be none that the English translators were !* ”

We don't know their names, we only know of them as “ *Divers excellent learned men !* ”

It is the greatest achievement in letters. The Beauty of the translation of these unknown men excels, *far excels*, the real and the so-called originals. All nations and tongues of Christendom have come to admit reluctantly that no other Version of the Book offers so noble a setting for the Divine Message. *Read the Prayer Book Psalms.* They are from this noble Version—English at its zenith !

After the summer of 1917, either the Admiral's correspondence fell off, or Donald did not preserve it. More likely the Admiral ceased to write, for Donald, having cherished Fisher's letters for ten years, would scarcely have begun to destroy his notes. Probably they met occasionally in London, and at such meetings the Admiral handed to Donald copies of the memoranda which he wrote for the inspiration of Cabinet Ministers, for some of these documents have no covering letters to explain how they came into Donald's hands.

## CHAPTER IV

### WALTON HEATH AND WHITEHALL

**I**N his "War Diary," Lord Riddell affords to those who bring imagination to bear upon a somewhat arid presentation of facts, a diverting picture of the colony of politicians and journalists which existed at Walton Heath in Surrey during the war years. There has been nothing quite like it, before or since.

The colony was not large. It was a mere coterie, whose obvious *raison d'être* was golf on the Walton Heath course. Generally, at the week-ends, it was reinforced by a contingent of equally notable guests, so that a little light play with a machine-gun from a Walton Heath bunker on a Saturday morning might have had revolutionary results, transforming the Cabinet, accelerating promotion to the judicial bench, and changing the course of history in Fleet Street. With a cynicism born of disillusionment and of cheap wisdom after the event, some may regret that such a fusillade did not occur; but the truth would seem to be that in spite of the sycophancy, the plotting and counterplotting, and the insincerities which the evident camaraderie of the colony could not conceal, what was said and done at Walton Heath during the war years was incidentally, or perhaps accidentally, of real service to the country.

Whatever the dominant motives in the minds of some of the colonists, at these informal conferences of statesmen, politicians and editors, the realities of the country's task were recognized, the desire for action was present, and the atmosphere was more appropriate to the times than that of the

cloistered retreats in which some leaders of the period chose to spend their leisure.

"In the early days of the war, I played a good deal of golf with Mr. Lloyd George," Donald told a Canadian audience in 1920. "He was thinking more of the war than he was thinking of the game; but it was necessary for him to take some exercise. The first thing on his mind was a tremendous interest in rifles. He did not know how a rifle was made, but he soon picked it up, and he said, 'We are searching the whole world for rifles. We can't get them, and we won't get them for a year.' But he got rifles. . . . It was due to Mr. Lloyd George that the Americans were brought in to supply munitions."

It is a pity, perhaps, that Donald kept no diary of these fair-way conversations with Mr. Lloyd George. Possibly a fastidious sense of propriety forbade it. He was always careful to discriminate in his use of information given to him in his professional capacity and knowledge acquired in social intercourse.

Though the fraternal spirit of the colony may have been a spurious thing (Donald once settled an incipient libel action between two notable colonists), some genuine friendships were formed at Walton Heath. That there was a real bond between the Lloyd George and Donald households is undeniable, whatever may have been the real relationship of the Minister and the editor. Such friendship as there was between the two men fluctuated considerably during the war, until, ultimately, the memory of it only survived to prevent their relationship degenerating into an affair of frigid formalities. But in 1914 their attitude towards each other bore every sign of genuine friendship, and even at the middle period of the war they were on such agreeable terms that an engagement book shows seven meetings between Mr. Lloyd George and Donald in a space of six weeks. Those were meetings at Walton only. They do not include calls or meals together in London.

Lord Riddell's Diary opens with a glimpse of Mr. Lloyd

George, Donald and Lord Riddell attending a performance of *Potash and Perlmutter*, not the first theatrical performance which Mr. Lloyd George and Donald had witnessed together ; but the golf course was their more usual meeting place.

Donald has left a note recalling a Saturday morning which he spent with Mr. Lloyd George on the golf course when "L.G. began ruminating on the prospects of the war. No one at that time (continues Donald) foresaw the stupendous developments and duration of the conflict, but he (L.G.) was convinced that we were in for a terrific struggle. He remarked that every war threw up a man. He wondered who would emerge as the big war figure in England. Kitchener, he thought, were he more of a statesman (at that time Kitchener's weaknesses as a War Minister were not patent). Balfour, had he been younger, might have a chance. Churchill could not carry democracy with him. At that time Asquith's political leadership was not in question, but Mr. Lloyd George was thinking also of war leadership. I do not believe that he was, at this time, thinking of himself . . . but his thoughts were an interesting premonition."

After such intimacy, it is painful to find Lord Riddell recording on March 29th, 1915 :

L.G. telephoned to me in a state of great anger and excitement regarding a leader in the *Chronicle* referring to a so-called conspiracy to supersede the Prime Minister. The names of his suggested successors were mentioned, including L.G. who described the leader as most injurious and indiscreet.

The next scene in the drama is found in Lord Oxford's *Memories and Reflections* :

March 30th, 1915. L.G. and McKenna came here at 3.30 . . . L.G. began on a very stormy note accusing McKenna of having inspired Donald to write the article in the *Chronicle* which was headed, "Intrigue against the P.M."

Lord Oxford does not disclose to what degree this episode was exceptional, and whether sharp exchanges between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. McKenna were not, in fact, of frequent occurrence. This particular bout, however, must have been memorable, for Lord Oxford reverts to it later in his narrative, and writes of "L.G. and McKenna fighting like fishwives." The relationship of the two Ministers at this date is important, because it may account for the interpretation which Mr. Lloyd George put upon the offending article. That a bitter feud unbalances the judgment of the contending parties, and causes each to discern the other's hand in the most innocent situations, is well known. This episode may have been another example of the baseless suspicion which animosity can breed.

Mr. Lloyd George's feelings were so deeply disturbed by the *Chronicle* article, that even after the turbulent scene in the Cabinet room, the storm had not blown itself out. The same day Lord Riddell saw Mr. Lloyd George at the Treasury :

He spoke very strongly about the *Daily Chronicle* article, which he described as indiscreet and foolish. He said that the Prime Minister is much perturbed. "The old boy was in tears," L.G. continued. "I shall not let this rest. I have never intrigued for place or office. I have intrigued to carry through my schemes, but that is a different matter. The Prime Minister has been so good to me that I would never be disloyal to him in the smallest detail. I may criticize him among ourselves, as I have no doubt he criticizes me, but we are absolutely loyal to each other. I have been very worried by this leader, which is open to the construction that it was inspired by me with a view to giving point to the criticisms in the Tory papers, of which no one is taking any notice." I strongly advised L.G. not to allow the subject to worry him. He looked quite ill. He thanked me for my advice and said he had told the Prime Minister he should consult me.

It is interesting to turn from these painful scenes to the article which caused the commotion, and to search it with a disinterested eye for justification of Mr. Lloyd George's anger. It appeared on March 29th, 1915, and was headed "The Intrigue against the Prime Minister."

After remarking that observance of the political truce on the Unionist side seemed almost confined to their front bench, and giving details of some Press attacks on Liberal Ministers and on Lord Kitchener, the article continues :

The target of the latest intrigue is the Prime Minister. No one in these islands holds a more responsible position ; no one is more alive to his responsibilities or discharges them more thoroughly. Few men possess a greater power of work or make better use of it. But because the very facts of his occupation withdraw Mr. Asquith from the public gaze, and because in his public appearance he preserves always that bearing of serene cheerfulness and that total absence of fuss which is not the least factor in his efficiency, it has been thought worth while to put about by innuendo and suggestion the pretence that he is not fit for his task. Catalogues of the nation's leaders appear—such as that in the *Observer* of March 21st—from which the Prime Minister's name is conspicuously and with obvious significance omitted. At one time it is Mr. Lloyd George whom the Unionist press seem inclined to exalt as a luminary eclipsing his chief. At another, it is Lord Kitchener, behind whom the Government (and as *The Times* put it on March 20th, especially the Prime Minister) are accused of sheltering themselves. At another time it is Mr. Balfour whose welcome readiness to lend a hand in various matters regarding the public safety is stressed as if it pointed in some way to his superior fitness for national leadership. And then come the hints that these statesmen, with perhaps Mr. Churchill thrown in, and no doubt some further contributions from the Unionist benches might







coalesce into a Government whose strenuous virility would put the present Prime Minister to shame. It is instructive, if one runs over the anti-Ministerial pin-pricks for the last month or so, to notice how large a proportion of them are either expressly or by implication directed to Mr. Asquith.

That the article had no such implication as Mr. Lloyd George read into it is evident from a leader note published in the *Daily Chronicle* on the following day—that is to say on the morning of March 30th, before Mr. Lloyd George embarked upon his altercation with Mr. McKenna, and before he summoned Lord Riddell to soothe his outraged feelings.

After referring to the *Morning Post's* rejoinder to the editorial article of the previous day ("The Intrigue against the Prime Minister"), the note observed: "As for the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George) his unswerving loyalty to his chief has always been and is, one of the bedrock factors in Cabinet affairs. The Opposition mischief-makers are as far away from reality here as in their caricature of the Prime Minister."

It is possible that for a correct appreciation of Mr. Lloyd George's state of mind one must turn to Lord Oxford's record of March 29th, the day upon which the *Daily Chronicle* article was published. Here we find Asquith speaking to Mr. Lloyd George about certain "sinister and as I believed, absurd interpretations which were being given to the articles in *The Times*, *Observer*, and *Morning Post*." It was in this conversation that Mr. Lloyd George with tears in his eyes, made his famous protestation of loyalty to Asquith, saying he would rather (to quote Lord Oxford's catalogue) "break stones, dig potatoes, be hung, drawn and quartered" than say a word or harbour a thought that was disloyal to his chief.

In his conversation with Mr. Lloyd George, it will be observed that Asquith made no reference to the *Daily Chronicle* article published that morning. If he had seen it (which is unlikely,

in view of his disdainful attitude towards the "popular" Press) it is inconceivable that a mind so lucid and direct could have regarded it as being capable of a "sinister" interpretation. But seemingly Mr. Lloyd George did so regard it.

The breach which this article created between Mr. Lloyd George and Donald healed, superficially. Less than three weeks after the publication of the article, Donald was dining with Mr. Lloyd George in company with the editors of the *Daily News*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Liverpool Post*.<sup>1</sup> These distinguished Liberal journalists had been gathered together by Mr. Lloyd George to hear his impulsive proposals for State purchase of the liquor industry.

This scheme for the acquisition of the trade at a cost estimated at 350 millions sterling captured the imagination of many men who were not warm admirers of its author, among them Mr. McKenna. Donald, however, would not support it. Writing of the dinner party at which Mr. Lloyd George explained his scheme Lord Riddell says, "With the exception of Donald of the *Chronicle*, the editors appear to have acquiesced." Donald's own version reads: "Some of us feared difficulties in management would arise. These, however, he (Mr. Lloyd George) brushed aside."

This ambitious project soon collapsed under strong opposition from Conservative leaders who were acting in friendly co-operation with the Government. A month after Mr. Lloyd George's promising conversation with the editors, Asquith was writing the epitaph of the scheme, "The Great Purchase Folly is as dead as Queen Anne."

With the formation of the first Coalition the liquor scheme was quickly forgotten. New issues arose, but they provided no new note to which Mr. Lloyd George and Donald could attune their minds. Dissonance between them continued. The first Saturday's golf after the formation of the Coalition was marked

<sup>1</sup> Others present, according to Donald's record, included Mr. McKenna, Sir Thomas Whittaker, C. F. G. Masterman, and H. W. Massingham.

by an argument in which Donald and Charles Masterman opposed Mr. Lloyd George's view about the wisdom of forming a Coalition government. Then when Mr. Lloyd George showed himself sympathetic to conscription he failed to carry Donald with him, and the statesman who had so frequently inspired the political policy of the *Daily Chronicle* was again out of sympathy with his favourite newspaper. During a round of golf in September, Mr. Lloyd George who was "very strong on the necessity of conscription" told Donald that he was pursuing a wrong course and that he would have to "eat his words."

This conversation, according to Lord Riddell, took place on August 15th, 1915. It is significant that in Asquith's Memoirs an August entry shows that among the "most stalwart and passionate opponents of conscription was Mr. McKenna." If Mr. McKenna was visualized by Mr. Lloyd George as being actively engaged in persuading Donald to his point of view, of alienating the support of the *Daily Chronicle* from Mr. Lloyd George, then it is curious that no clue to such activities exists among Donald's papers; and it is curious also that Mr. McKenna at the moment when he was supposed to be concentrating upon this purpose, should have taken a view strongly and entirely contrary to Donald's on the question of State purchase of the liquor trade.

So far as his papers provide evidence, Donald was not on specially intimate terms with Mr. McKenna. Though in 1918, as will appear later, Donald interested Mr. McKenna in a scheme for acquiring the *Daily Chronicle* (but even here Mr. McKenna was interested as Lord Cowdray's adviser and not on his own behalf), at other times his relationship with Mr. Lloyd George's *bête noir* was not noticeably different from his relationship with any other Liberal Minister.

In the matter of conscription, the *Daily Chronicle*, like every other Liberal newspaper, was in an extremely difficult position. The choice was not between the need of the nation and the traditional policy of the Liberal Party, but a question of

whether the mass of people at home, still scarcely conscious of the grim realities of the war, would support the Government in abandoning the voluntary principle—a point upon which even Lord Kitchener harboured doubts. At all events, the *Daily Chronicle*, which could not be accused of lack of patriotism, did not follow Mr. Lloyd George's lead on this issue. And Mr. Lloyd George was not the only reader to complain.

Among the many letters addressed to the Editor was one from an officer serving at the front which appears to have been written at almost the same time that Mr. Lloyd George was voicing his criticism to Lord Riddell.

Donald was much impressed by the letter. He had it put into type and would have published it, but for the fact that the parts from which it derived its strength would certainly have been deleted by the censor, and the rest would have been almost meaningless. As evidence of the feeling prevailing in the army at the time, the letter merits preservation, and is here given in full save for the deletion of a somewhat confused passage which has no bearing on the writer's arguments.

*To the Editor of the "Daily Chronicle."*

Sir,—I cannot help but start with abuse, although you are only one of those "in touch with the vast anti-conscriptionist mass of British opinion," as your leader writer puts it. Damn British opinion, Sir; damn the vain, self-complacent English smugness and English arrogance. To your "vast mass" the idea of defeat is quite inconceivable, for are they not the boys of the bulldog breed, the descendants of countless heroes, free men in a free country, who just won't be slaves, the liberators! of Belgium, and so on ad nauseam? So colossal is British arrogance that our brains and imagination are swamped. We still seem to think that the Germans have made war to gratify us, so that we may show them what fine fellows we really are. Probably you, too,

have never entertained the idea that we are losing this war. Yet the bald truth remains that the Germans are winning on points ; and we go on talking, talking about the " big push "—to be delivered next spring, according to the " Times " military correspondent. (Please observe that we have given up the idea this year—we are still wearing down the " baby-killing Hun.")

If you could see trenches hammered to hell by hundreds of guns, hours of smoke, dust, blood and noise, and then go across to take these same battered lines, only to be met by a hail of bullets, to return leaving your friends and men lying dead outside, it might make you realize what an enormous advantage lies with the defence.

The French have battered for five weeks—I have heard it day and night—net gain two miles !

The bubble of breaking through has burst, but we are too deaf to hear the " pop."

You answer with the German advance in Russia, and then go on to the financial problem. Of course Germany cannot last, of course she will be starved in a few months, of course she has no cotton, no copper, but she has got brains and method, and uses both.

And we muddle along in our well-worn grooves, our party politics, our newspaper dictatorship, our racing, our brides in their baths.

I have been ten months in France fighting for that—the thought almost makes me vomit.

Don't talk about the " glorious traditions of our race." Only fools fight for traditions ; the wise man fights for realities and the future.

This long-winded preamble leads me on to your crowning folly—your fear and hatred of conscription.

You, in touch with your vast mass, won't have National Service in the nation's cause because " all that is characteristically English dies if English freedom perishes."

Those worn-out myths ! None of us are free, and you know it. Smith was not free to drown his brides. We are all slaves of the community, and, some think, of the country in which we live.

Will you leave your dear old principles for a moment, and look at things from another point of view ?

In a great national crisis it must be taken for granted (I assume that the nation is virile) that every man and woman is willing to serve the country. In other words, every man and woman is a volunteer.

If you deny this hypothesis, you damn the country and "your vast mass of British opinion."

Probably your "principles" will not be shocked by this statement. Well, then, every man and woman is willing to serve. To take full advantage of this willingness it must be organized—in a word, conscription ; that awful bogey word, which gives some little Liberals and some little Conservatives and some little Socialists bad dreams.

I know that I am not writing to a child, but conscription does not mean that everyone is a soldier—it means that George, who is an engineer, engineers for the State. Tom, who is a skilful workman, works for the State ; and Harry and Bill, who are fit to fight, fight and perhaps die for the State.

The State calls her children and allots to them their tasks.

What monstrous, wicked, bloody oppression !

And you must go on unblushingly with your old voluntary muddle. George the engineer may join the R.A.M.C., Tom the skilled workman may fight, and the Harrys and Bills may become politicians and newspaper editors, for all the country seems to care.

Of course, one volunteer is equal to four pressed men. Our copy-books say so, therefore it must be true. "Any-

how," said an English soldier, "I hope I never meet a bloody German volunteer."

When you think of the Germans, their wonderful self-sacrifices, their wonderful courage and fortitude and unanimity, doesn't it make you blush for your own country?

Throw away your principles man, throw away the lumber of the past and look things in the face.

Don't blather about God upholding the cause of the just and the bulldog pluck pulling us through—I am tired of pulpit and music-hall sentiments. Realize that the Germans are a better and a more virile race than we are and try to teach your vast mass of British opinion to surpass them at their own game.

I am an Englishman and the chances are that I shall never see another year, yet our national sentimentality, our conceit, our petty squabbling, our politics, our lack of method have made of me one of the most ardent pro-Germans in Europe.

I cannot say why I have treated you to this round of abuse—you are no worse than others, if anything a trifle better than that loathsome Northcliffe crowd with their party political jobbery.

But you, sir, are blinded by Principles—which is nearly as bad. Bound hand and foot by past traditions and the utterances of statesmen now happily dead, but unfortunately not forgotten. Cannot "*The Daily Chronicle*" think for itself, or must it still be bound by the opinions of, say, Gladstone? Really, even such a demi-god as he can get out of date.

Could you but realize how nauseating it is to read any London daily, "the mouthpieces of the nation" (in block letters, please) with their squabbles, their meanness and their follies.

You are better—that is why I take the trouble to write this, but good God! you're bad enough.



ROBERT DONALD

I am abusive, but when moved, superficial politeness is jettisoned, and, candidly, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to drive these things into your head with a mallet—the distance, however, is too great. Even the Germans and their deadly earnestness cannot convince you.

This letter is not intended for any publicity, though it would be amusing to see some of your public reading it, nor is it intended to draw forth any reply. The labour in writing it will not be grudged if I know that you had read it and thought for five minutes on what I have said.

We have such a colossal task before us that poor mortals like me are appalled, but the Olympians at home still go unmoved about their god-like business. It is they who need help, not we.

In conclusion I shall quote Mr. Walter Long (*Morning Post*, July 10). "It would not have met the situation to have simply pressed more men into the service unless we could have put in their hands the rifles and ammunition, without which they would be useless to take part in the war." There you have the fallacy in a nutshell. Surely Long must know that National Service does not cram every man into the ranks when we cannot equip them (our voluntary system did that from August to December). If there is National Service they are called up when required.

You know that, and he knows it, yet your damnable politics befoul your mouths.

The Liberals are bound by Principles; the Socialists by the word Freedom; the Conservatives have no Principles and no traditions since 1906—if there were an ounce of ability in their broken camp they might break fresh ground, but the soil is barren.

I am asking my friend to transmit this letter to you, as it would be lost in the ordinary channels. My thoughts

and their mode of expression may be crude, Sir, but they have the virtue of being honest and outspoken.

I am, Sir, yours very truly,

DOCTOR IN THE R.A.M.C.

(Attached to a Lancs. Regiment.)

Plainly, Mr. Lloyd George reflected accurately the opinions of the soldiers when, in August, 1915, he differed from Donald on the question of conscription, but whether at that time he could have carried the country with him, is a matter upon which two opinions exist even now.

In June, 1916, at the time that the War Secretaryship was rendered vacant by the death of Lord Kitchener, there was another acute difference of opinion between Donald and Mr. Lloyd George. The Prime Minister desired Lloyd George to succeed Kitchener, and the public regarded him as incomparably the best successor to Kitchener. The political correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* readily acknowledged that he was the most eligible man for this onerous post, which, as a consequence of the nation being at war, had acquired an importance second only to the Premiership.

But it soon became apparent that there were obstacles to the consummation of the general wish. In the course of the war the duties and responsibilities of the Secretary of State for War had undergone drastic changes. They had been adapted to meet the unprecedented situation created by the appointment of a Field-Marshal to a civilian post ; they had been adjusted to create a working relationship between the War Office and new Ministry of Munitions ; they had been further diminished because of the inequalities of Kitchener's gifts. Experience, sometimes painful and expensive, had dictated these changes, and the general effect of them was to deprive the office of some of the powers which its holder enjoyed in times of peace, and to distribute them among others.

The prospect of moving from the Ministry of Munitions, where he enjoyed enormous powers, to a post more glamorous, but whose scope was now severely restricted, did not appeal to Mr. Lloyd George. "I had no liking," he confesses in his *War Memoirs*, "for the prospect of finding myself a mere ornamental figure in Whitehall," and in a letter to Asquith he wrote, "No statesman with any self-respect would consent to occupy office under the humiliating conditions to which poor Kitchener had been reduced during the last few months of his life. Many a time I have seen him wince under the indignity of his position." It seems relevant to remark in passing that his solicitude for Kitchener (whose changed status was entirely the work of Mr. Lloyd George and his Cabinet colleagues) does not appear to have moved Mr. Lloyd George until he was invited to fill Kitchener's place.

Be that as it may. On June 17th the *Daily Chronicle* published a leading article on the subject of "The New Secretary of State for War." After touching upon the speculations that were current concerning Kitchener's successor the article continued :

We do not propose to nominate anyone for the position, nor to offer the Prime Minister any advice on the subject. There are, however, some general considerations which, though obvious, may be usefully noted. The War Office has undergone important changes during the war. The vast growth of work under Lord Kitchener led to devolution in many directions. First, the provision of munitions was taken away, and a new Ministry started with the conspicuous energy of Mr. Lloyd George. After that, recruiting was delegated ; and later again came the development of the Imperial General Staff. These offshoots of the parent tree are now at different stages. Recruiting has passed the point of greatest difficulty and importance. Munitions, on the contrary, have not. . . . There must be a continuous development of new weapons.

Mr. Lloyd George said long ago that this is an engineers' war. But the novelty with the most continuing importance is the Imperial General Staff. Created under a Chief who is for the first time independent of the War Minister, his staff has practically taken over the strategic control of the war. . . .

That the Imperial General Staff is efficient everyone admits and it is well known that it has the complete confidence of the Army. The arrangement which now exists is unprecedented in our political history ; and it has been justified by the unique position in which the nation finds itself, when anything like a pedantic insistence on political traditions might prove fatal. But in fact the relation between the Parliamentary Chief and the High Command is always a difficult matter in democratic countries. It has been so in France. . . .

At present, the touchstone in Great Britain—the test which the Prime Minister must inevitably apply before all others—is simple : What system is now best suited for the direction of the war ? Is the General Staff going to continue to carry on the work which it has perfected during the last six months, or are we to have another reorganization of the War Office ? But to ask such a question is almost equivalent to answering it. Certainly this is no opportune time to reorganize the War Office.

The system which has been in operation during the last six months has, on the whole, worked decidedly well. It had only one element of weakness, in that there was no Cabinet Minister of standing to speak for the War Office in the House of Commons. He would, of course, be a civilian, but he should be one who would take a keen personal interest in the work of the Army, besides speaking with authority in the House. Apart from the direction of the war, the duties left to the War Minister to carry out are heavy and responsible. There is room for an outstanding man, but he must be a man content to work and

shine in his own orbit, without infringing on the orbit of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

On the day following the publication of this article, Mr. Lloyd George was at Walton, and invited Lord Riddell to dinner. "I referred," says Lord Riddell, "to a leader in yesterday's *Daily Chronicle*."

L. G.—The article is most harmful : it will prejudice the negotiations with Robertson. When one is negotiating one often asks more than one is prepared to accept. The publication at a critical moment in the negotiations of an article which urges that the other party should grant nothing is most prejudicial. And it is by no means certain that I shall go to the War Office.

It is significant that, according to his *Memoirs*, on the very day that the offending article was published Mr. Lloyd George wrote to the Prime Minister a lengthy communication giving vent to his dissatisfaction with the whole conduct of the war, and expressing his wish to leave the Government.

Ultimately, he was dissuaded from his apparent intention to resign, and he took the War Office.

Donald's article, however, was not forgotten. From the time of its publication in June until Mr. Lloyd George was installed as Prime Minister in December, the two men did not meet, although they spent most of their week-ends as near neighbours at Walton Heath, and played golf on the same course. Before the war, such an estrangement would have been incredible.

In pre-war days the policy of the *Daily Chronicle* was to support Liberalism. Following the Liberal path, it pursued a line almost midway, inclining slightly to the left. Thus, for long periods, it was moving with Mr. Lloyd George, and was so consistently in harmony with his views that it came to be regarded by many, including Mr. Lloyd George, as peculiarly

his mouthpiece. But when the war came, bringing problems that were not related to the old issues, and making political opinion more fluid, the independence of the *Daily Chronicle* became manifest, and Mr. Lloyd George resented the fact that Donald would not follow at his heels wherever his impulses, his intrigues, and his personal ambitions took him.

Lady Donald recalls an occasion when Mr. Lloyd George entered the Donald home in high dudgeon, with a copy of the *Daily Chronicle* in his hand. Donald being absent, he invited Lady Donald's attention to the leading article and expressed great annoyance with some part of it which he interpreted as a criticism of himself.

Lady Donald reminded her visitor of his devotion to the Bible. She quoted the line "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and suggested that any criticism of him which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* must be taken in that spirit.

But Mr. Lloyd George was not appeased. Wagging a monitory forefinger he exclaimed, "Tell Robert I will not have it. If it appeared in any other paper I would not care much, but the *Chronicle* is different."

Lady Donald declined to deliver the message, saying that she did not interfere in her husband's professional affairs, and if she did convey such a message to her husband, she did not believe for a moment that he would be intimidated by it.

The rebuff which Mr. Lloyd George suffered on this occasion may or may not have an echo in a conversation which took place on Christmas Day, 1916, between Lord Riddell and Mr. Lloyd George.

R. : You saw Gardiner of the *Daily News* on Thursday. I hear that he asked Donald to join him in urging discussion of peace terms. Of course D. declined. He is sound on the war, and he knew what to expect when he reached home had he adopted any other course.

(Mrs. D. is a Frenchwoman and a most ardent patriot and anti-German.)

L.G. (laughing heartily) : Well, surely you don't object. Every man is entitled to endeavour to ward off domestic misery.

R. : In this instance, interest coincided with duty.

Which is proof that what the rationed dining-tables of the colony lacked in fare was made good by the witty conversation of the diners. And to dissipate the suspicions of the ungenerous, it should be said that most of the colonists by habit, or by force of the Royal example, were teetotallers, so that these coruscations of wit were sustained only by tap-water.

## CHAPTER V

### PROFIT AND LOSS

**T**HERE was a time when pacifists argued that the Press made wars because wars meant good business for the newspapers. If that statement were true at any time, the experience of the Great War did not confirm it.

During 1914-1918, interest in the news about the war certainly increased the demand for newspapers. Readers acquired the now widespread habit of buying more than one newspaper. Individuals who had been content to buy one morning newspaper now purchased two, in the hope that the second paper carried some news that was not in the first : or perhaps they supplemented the resources of the orthodox paper by those of a picture paper. Sales of newspapers increased substantially.

Income from the sale of the paper, however, is not the most important item in the accounts of newspaper enterprises ; the advertisement revenue is far more important. And no less important are the costs of production.

As the war dragged on, the costs of newspaper production grew enormously. Paper ("newsprint") rose in price from about £9 per ton in 1914, to £35 in 1918, and the restrictions upon imports led to the rationing of supplies, so that enterprise was cramped and the space available for advertisements was severely limited.

A study of the pre-war habits of the public in relation to newspapers makes it fair to assume that, had the war not occurred, the newspaper industry would have enjoyed a considerable growth of prosperity. Taking that prospect, and



setting beside it the actual experience of newspaper companies during the period 1914-1918, there is no doubt that the newspapers lost heavily by the Great War. The aftermath was even more serious. The economic consequences of the war killed off newspapers by the score.

In the first two years of the war, however, business was good. In 1915 the net profits of the *Daily Chronicle* and *Lloyd's Weekly News* were £43,650—equal to a dividend of 32·7 per cent (free of tax) on the ordinary shares. Though the company had done better than that in some pre-war years, 32·7 per cent was a return well above the average.

During 1915 and 1916 there was encouragement to enterprise in the newspaper field, so long as those in charge did not take too gloomy a view of the duration of the war. In those circumstances, although it was none too easy to make good the losses of the staff through the claims of war service, Frank Lloyd and Robert Donald felt that development should not be entirely arrested.

In the early days of the war they decided to launch upon the production of periodicals and cheap books. One of the first fruits of this decision was a pictorial weekly called the *War Budget* which in the course of the war attained a weekly sale of 250,000 copies. Other productions were added, and many small booklets and popular "libraries" were published by the company. By 1918 this branch was yielding a net profit in the neighbourhood of £20,000 per annum.

In this development it is only fair to say that Donald's part was largely advisory. The credit for the success of the undertaking belonged to others, prominent among them a newspaper manager who has since achieved distinction in a larger field, Mr. F. J. Cook.

Less fortunate, however, was the decision to launch an evening newspaper. Impelled by the well-founded belief that there was room for another halfpenny evening paper in London, Donald secured Frank Lloyd's approval to plans for a paper to be launched in the spring of 1915.

**BARING CITY TRADER.**

Probably One of the Fleet  
Meant for Paris.

**TO-DAY'S NEWS OF THE GREAT FIASCO**

**INTERVIEWING JOURNALISTS.**

Persons who have arrived at Manchester from Liverpool report that the *Standard's* reporter who was enabled to reach London earlier than the others, has been interviewed by the other reporters of the great news agencies, and that he has been asked to give them the details of his interview with the Duke of Devonshire.

[illegible]

WIND BOMB EFFECTS.

**Flowers in Garden Upseed and  
Showered on Roof.**

1. The first step is to identify the main components of the system. This includes the hardware (e.g., sensors, actuators, controllers) and the software (e.g., algorithms, data processing).

HF FCHO

It is interesting to compare the style of this war-time production with the style of newspapers of to-day.



The choice of a title was not easy, and eventually it was decided to revive an old name—*The Echo*. For thirty-seven years (from 1868 to 1905) there had been in London an evening newspaper called *The Echo*, and at one time it had enjoyed great popularity. Only ten years had elapsed since its name had been cried throughout the city, and possibly some of the goodwill it had enjoyed might be secured by the new paper. As against sentimental objections to giving the new paper the title of a paper that had died, there was the important fact that no other available name was so agreeable to the ear or so easy for the sellers to call. So the new paper was named *The Echo*. There was to be a subsidiary, family title, *The London Evening Chronicle*, attached obviously with the intention of capturing the goodwill of readers of the morning paper.

This part of the plan was generally approved. But the next decision was surprisingly unorthodox. It was resolved that "at first" the paper would take no advertisements.

The arguments in favour of this course were cogent and ingenious. By excluding advertisements during the time when the paper must win popular favour, it would be possible to give a much larger measure of news. The public, it was reasoned, bought a newspaper for the news. *The Echo* would give an abundance of news, full measure, pressed down and running over. That would make the public talk about the new paper. Advertisements would wait upon success. Advertisements for the first issues of a new paper were always easily secured, because public curiosity in the first few numbers ensured a good circulation and careful perusal. But an excess of advertisements would mean less space for news at the very time when the paper should be giving better value than its rivals. So the one-idea men, the "news, first, last, and every time" school, won the day.

London was promised not merely a new evening paper, but one which, at first, would be unique by reason of the absence of advertisements. In the sequel, that proved to be its only claim to distinction.

*The Echo and London Evening Chronicle* was born in March, 1915. That was a propitious month for new newspapers. Within a few days of the publication of *The Echo*, the *Sunday Pictorial* and the *Sunday Herald* (now the *Sunday Graphic*) were launched upon the world, and achieved very great success. But not by giving a surfeit of news at the expense of variety.

On March 22nd, a fleet of swift, attractive little vans broke away from Salisbury Square bearing the first issue of *The Echo*. It had a clean, workmanlike appearance and, as the result of several rehearsals in which a complete paper was printed but not issued to the public, the first number gave no evidence of having emerged from an office which had never before published an evening newspaper.

The news of the day was above the average in interest. The Russians had captured Przemyśl after a six months' siege : a Zeppelin had been wrecked near Liège, and a German liner that had attempted to dash out of a neutral port in South America had been turned back by gunfire from forts. The *plats du jour* were excellent, and the news *à la carte* was prolific.

On the feature pages there was some good reading. T. P. O'Connor contributed a special article, predicting a great future for evening newspapers. Charles Garvice, then the most popular writer of romantic fiction, provided the serial story. Feminine interests were represented efficiently but not generously. The new paper began well.

Six weeks later *The Echo* was dead. A "funeral card" in its thirty-sixth issue, published on May 3rd, announced its amalgamation with *The Star*, to take effect the next day. Fleet Street estimated Frank Lloyd's loss at something between £60,000 and £100,000.

Expert opinion, published in the *Newspaper World*, said that the paper had been "extremely well-done in every respect," but "lacked distinguishing form."

An inquest by a jury of experienced journalists would, per-

haps, have held that the paper was not given the chance it deserved. Six weeks is no time in which to establish a habit, and the purchase of a particular newspaper is a habit which the public must be induced by patient and persistent effort to acquire. Nor can a newspaper, in so brief a space, develop distinctive characteristics, or even outgrow its teething troubles.

The first requirement of a new London newspaper is a proprietor with the courage to see his money poured out in distressingly large sums. In this instance (if the estimate of loss be correct) Frank Lloyd watched it gush out at the rate of more than £10,000 per week. After six weeks he faltered, and suddenly—quite unexpectedly it would seem—he decided to cut his loss and stop the publication of the paper.

The decision not to take advertisements was mistaken. After the first week it was rescinded, and a certain measure of success attended heroic efforts to get advertising, in spite of the fact that canvassing arrangements had to be improvised hurriedly, instead of being set up *pari passu* with the carefully constructed organization for producing the paper. An increasing revenue from advertising, even though it were inadequate, would have fortified the proprietorial nerve.

It is questionable, too, whether readers appreciated the absence of advertisements. In varying degrees, the general public are interested in advertising, and it is arguable that even readers who do not peruse the advertisements would have an uneasy feeling that a paper that did not carry advertising was a freak publication which could not live long. While news is the first essential of a newspaper, it is by no means the only desirable component.

Fleet Street had few tears for its lost infant, and within the *Daily Chronicle* office the mourning was neither profound nor prolonged. Events immeasurably more tragic were happening every hour across the English Channel.

During 1915 Donald paid two visits to France. One of these he appears to have undertaken with a semi-official mission

to inquire into the state of political opinion in France concerning the war. In a long report written on his return he records several conversations with French politicians, and adds his own observations. One Minister with whom he talked made a remark concerning the post-war future which is worth recalling now, nearly twenty years after it was made. This statesman, visualizing the period after the war, said :

“ We must have a reduction in armaments. I do not see the millennium in sight yet, but the production of armaments could be controlled by an international Commission, upon which the present belligerents and the neutrals would be represented. The Commission would have its agents in every country to see that the production of arms was reduced to the scale imposed upon all nations. No guns, explosives, or war equipment should be manufactured secretly or by private firms. Limitation of armaments can only be accompanied by international agreement, and it would be necessary to have an international force to see that agreements were observed. I throw out this only as a suggestion for the purpose of emphasizing the imperative need for united action by England and France when the war is ended.”

Among those whom Donald met was Georges Clemenceau, then free of office and employing his gifts largely in outwitting the French censorship regulations. His paper, *L'Homme Libre*, having been suppressed, he was editing a new journal, *L'Homme Enchaîné*. Donald wrote a short, anonymous article for the *Chronicle* describing a call on Clemenceau, in which he remarked, “ M. Clemenceau has a notable record, and we may expect that in spite of his seventy-four years, he still has a great future.” How great, perhaps hardly Donald guessed, for it could not then have seemed credible that Clemenceau would become the supreme political figure produced by France during the war.

This was not Donald's only call on Clemenceau, the editor.

"During the war," Donald told a gathering of French-Canadian journalists at Quebec in 1920, "I visited Clemenceau frequently in his modest home in the Rue Franklin, and also in the tiny office of his paper, up a small stairway in a dark court, where sat the strong, virile man of France, at a plain deal table, writing his articles and correcting his proofs. . . . From this position he leapt to the head of the Government at the gravest time in the history of his country. By his courage, his tenacity, his fine spirit and his ardent patriotism he saved France and became the greatest figure in the world. When he was eighty years old and retired, a friend regretted that he had not become President of the Republic. 'That is nothing,' he replied, 'with good men and a good paper, one can be king of the world.'"

In August, 1915, Donald crossed the Channel on a visit to the British Army. Although he was received at General Headquarters, he did not see the Commander-in-Chief, and Sir John French wrote to him later expressing his regret that they did not meet. Close behind this letter came another from the Field-Marshal thanking Donald for a leading article dealing with the British Army in France which had been published in the *Daily Chronicle* as the result of Donald's visit. This second note must have been gratifying to Donald, because, some time earlier, there had been published in the *Daily Chronicle*, without Donald's approval, something about G.H.Q. which had been less pleasing to the Commander-in-Chief, for French wrote concerning it :

"I am quite sure the article to which you refer was never approved by you. It is very unfortunate that people can be found with such evil minds as to spread slanderous reports—particularly in such times of stress and strain ; but we must take this world as we find it !"

In the following year, Donald visited the French Army, taking with him Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, later, wrote a series of articles for the *Chronicle* recording his impressions.



With Conan Doyle to write the story, there was little left for Donald to say, but under the pseudonym of "A Special Correspondent," he wrote an article for the *War Budget* describing some of his experiences in the Argonne, in which he said :

The great forest consists of sturdy oaks and beeches and firs, with a thick tangle of undergrowth, mountain, valley, and plateau alternating. The soil is soft clay, admirably suited for entrenching, tunnelling, and mine warfare—when it is dry. As an outside observer, I do not see why the war in this area should not go on for a hundred years, without any decisive result. What is happening now is precisely what happened last year. The only difference is that the trenches are deeper, dug-outs better made, tunnels are longer, and the charges of explosives heavier. The armies are fighting Nature in the Argonne. The great oak and beech trees have to be destroyed completely before any advance can be made. Shells smash the trees, but leave broken trunks and torn and twisted branches, as an impenetrable barrier between the foes. They cannot be destroyed by liquid fire ; there is equal danger to both sides from such a conflagration. Explosives—and sometimes there are fifty tons in one mine—tear up the trees by the roots, hurl them into the air and excavate a huge crater ; but obstacles remain which make an immediate advance impossible. . . .

Starting from Sainte Menehould you are motored along the valley, passing villages which have been burnt by the enemy or have suffered from his artillery. There are many soldiers on the road. There are encampments in the woods, where huts have been built, or tents erected—"nigger villages" as the French call them. You notice that the huts are in some cases planted on the hillsides and great underground dwellings constructed. Leaving the car you are led up a mountain-side along rough paths.

Everywhere there are trenches, barbed wire, machine guns where they are least suspected, and all the complicated arrangements for defence. You soon have to take to the trenches. They are very deep, very narrow, and very wet. Streams of water run at the bottom. You must walk over wooden ladders made of the branches of trees, and have difficulty in keeping your feet. When nearing the summit the visitor has to put on a steel helmet. It is very heavy.

The nearer one gets to the front the more mysterious and wonderful become the methods of defence. You are allowed to peer through an observation post towards the German trenches a few hundred yards away. You see absolutely nothing but a mass of brushwood, broken trunks of trees, hanging branches and barbed wire.

At one point we are only ten yards from the enemy. "The Boches are just the other side of the road," said our guide. You look through a periscope, but see no sign of life whatever. You can just identify the enemy trenches. They have snipers on both sides to catch the unwary, and just as we are looking a French soldier on outpost duty is hit. We return down the hillside again by devious trenches to safer quarters. . . . "The whole mountains," said an officer, "are burrowed like a mole-hill. . . ."

On another part of the front we had a similar experience of exploring the Forest, but in this case the lines of contending trenches were about four hundred yards up the hill ; we came down the opposite slope, trudging through trenches to the valley near the Four de Paris, the scene of the fierce battle in 1914.

Shells had left their imprints in the valley quite recently. The soldiers were encamped at the foot of the hill. Their kitchens and huts were at the base, barbed wire and entrenchments behind them. We wanted to know why the Germans, having what appeared to be the

advantage of position, did not attack at night. We were told that the French guns on the opposite hill were trained on the enemy trenches, and at the first signal of a movement they would pour a shower of shells into them. The enemy tried an attack by gas recently, but it rolled back on themselves. Every now and then trenches change hands in the Argonne. The French capture a first trench partly for the purpose of securing a few German prisoners.

The guns are always at work. On the day of my visit to this area there was an almost continuous bombardment going on. The shells were hurtling over our heads. You heard the sharp discharge, and then the exploding of shell. You saw nothing. The sound re-echoes through the woods and valleys like rolling thunder. The French fire six rounds to the enemy's one. The object of the cannonading is to disturb any work going on behind the enemy lines.

We watched the system at work from the security of an observation post. The concealment of observation stations in the Argonne is complete.

The "Boches" occupied an exposed position, about a mile and a half away. They were at work in a quarry above the French trenches. "Give them a salvo of ten," telephoned the lieutenant to the guns, perhaps a couple of miles behind us. The first shell fell short. The lieutenant telephoned the direction in metres and the gunners soon got the exact range and planted their shells in the quarry. "We saw a German band hobbling along over there in a bunch the other day," said the lieutenant, "and we planted a shell in the middle of them. You should have seen them roll down the hill!"

Donald would have liked to see more of the war, but there is no evidence that he visited the front again. He was not one of those journalists who are inclined to seek such privileges more for the satisfaction of their own curiosity and the inci-

dental pleasures of an excursion, than for the discharge of a specific duty. Apart from the necessity of informing his mind in a general way on the realities of the campaign in the field, there was no need for Donald to add to the embarrassment of the military authorities by swelling the crowd of civilians who visited the front. Such assistance as he could give in the conduct of the war lay in other directions, and he applied himself to the work that he could do.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXIT ASQUITH

**A**SQUITH'S resignation of his office of Prime Minister in December, 1916, and the dissolution of the first Coalition Ministry have been the subject of lengthy controversy. To those who, like the writer, viewed this upheaval from obscure military places, it had the appearance of an inevitable event. It seemed very like the familiar spectacle of the supersession of a manager whose loss of grip on his duties has long been apparent ; or as Dr. Addison has expressed it, as " the culmination of a well-grounded dissatisfaction with the handling of affairs." For large numbers of people the only circumstance connected with the episode which causes any surprise is that such a vast amount of discussion and controversy has rumbled and flashed about it.

That much-instructed person, the historian of the future, may possibly accept Lord Beaverbrook's estimate of the importance of all the details attending the change of government of 1916. But we cannot anticipate the historian's verdict, and since the minutiae of the episode are still considered important, Robert Donald's record of events merits presentation.

Donald was, rightly and properly, a close observer of the political events of December, 1916. He witnessed the play from the wings. It is not claimed that he acted as a prompter, or that he did anything that had a decisive effect on the development of the drama. As the editor of what was then the principal Liberal newspaper in London, he kept himself closely in touch with the persons chiefly concerned in what

was the end of the Liberal Government which began its reign in 1905. The event was, perhaps, even more far reaching than that. History may describe it as the beginning of the end of the Liberal Party.

Though, normally, Donald did not keep a diary, he had a habit of compiling memoranda concerning episodes of exceptional interest. They began as notes dictated immediately after an interview or a conversation, and might be extended in revision. During the political crisis of 1916 he made many such memoranda. Arranged in a sequence which is not necessarily their chronological order, these writings tell the story as he knew it.

The first document, which he had filed under the heading "Political War Crisis of 1916," relates to an event which occurred on or about November 6th, 1916.

Sir Henry Norman called on me at 10 o'clock at night, with M. Painlevé, the French statesman who had come over that morning from Boulogne. They remained about two hours, during which time M. Painlevé discussed the new situation in view of the German attack on the Roumanians and the indication that Roumania would be defeated. Formerly, Painlevé had been rather optimistic about the war, but on this occasion he was very depressed. His theory was that the Germans would overrun Roumania and they would then turn to attack the allied force at Salonica, which would be unable to withstand them. We should have to withdraw, and the Allies would never recover from the blow. It would be the end of the war. There would be a revolution in France. The conditions in France were thoroughly bad.

I pointed out that there had been great victories on the Somme.

He replied that they did not matter; taking a few villages on the Somme would never win the war.

I said : " What about the French reconquest of Verdun, retaking ground in a few days which had taken Germany five months or so to conquer ? "

He replied that that was quite an easy matter, seeing that the Germans had withdrawn many of their guns to the Roumanian front and had weakened their forces. He said that the military direction of the war was thoroughly bad. It had been wrong since the Battle of the Marne. They must get rid of Joffre and make other changes in the High Command in France before any progress could be made. Both the French High Command and the British had deliberately starved the forces in Salonica. Any old motor-car which was not good enough for France was sent to Salonica ; old guns had also been dispatched. The British had equipped only two divisions and they were deliberately placing difficulties in the way of equipping more. He complained of the complete failure of our action in Greece, and he said that influences, not only here, but at the Quai d'Orsay, had been at work against the authorities whenever they attempted any firm action against the Greek King. He considered that dynastic influences were at work here and that other influences were having the same effect in France.

M. Painlevé came over, he said, to see Mr. Lloyd George with whom he had lunched that day, and a good deal of whom he would see during the week, in the hope that by combined action they might devise plans, both for France and for England, for the better direction of the war. If something radical were not done at once he was convinced that we would be defeated.

Painlevé remarked that France was becoming exhausted, and that there were only 800,000 reserves. Practically the whole of the French Army had been through Verdun. He was surprised that we had 1,700,000 British soldiers in France. The French people did not know that we had any such force. Briand's speech,

which was placarded all over France, only referred to the British Army as being "thousands and thousands."

He said that the Allies could even then help Roumania, by sending guns and men. His view was that the war had to be won in the East. Germany would conquer the whole of the Balkans. The Orient was the objective of German ambitions. M. Painlevé said that they must have a secret session in France, to thrash out the whole thing, and there might be a reconstruction.

M. Painlevé spent several days in London and met Mr. Lloyd George several times, Sir Henry Norman acting as interpreter. The two statesmen seem to be of the same mind.

The next entry in this informal diary occurs on November 24th, 1916.

Sir William Robertson and the Marquis de Chasseloup Laubat lunched with me. Sir William on this, as on former occasions, referred depreciatingly to the Roumanians. He never thought that they ought to have come in, and he always considered they would not be much good when they did join. He was quite against the Eastern effort, as he has always been, and now he considered that it had become quite impossible owing to the difficulty of transport. He thought that the effect of dragging in the Balkans was only to prolong the war and weaken our forces in the West. The only two Eastern countries which could have given us effective help were Bulgaria and Turkey, and we had them against us. He looked upon the origin of the Salonica expedition as purely political on the part of France. He was equally opposed to our tactics in Greece. Being there, he considered that we should have taken drastic steps long ago. Altogether, he thought that the Eastern policy was holding up a great many men. He said that the war would never be won by killing Turks or Bulgars. It could only



be won in the West, with the help of Russia in the East.

He said that an attempt had been made to get him to go to Russia. He did not know who originated it, but he thought it was Mr. Lloyd George. It was evidently one of the results following the recent Paris Conference. He did not want to go to Russia. He feared, apparently, that his position might be jeopardized in his absence and his colleagues interfered with. He did not want to run the risk of meeting the same fate as Kitchener. He did not see what good he could do if he were in Russia. Only the previous night he had to go to No. 10 Downing Street, where Mr. Asquith and Mr. Balfour had talked to him and tried to persuade him to change his mind and undertake the mission. He did not argue with them, but simply reiterated his "No!"

After lunch Sir William asked me to walk with him to the War Office. He complained that there was far too much delay and no possibility of getting decisions out of the War Council. It was far too big and there was too much discussion. Something had to be done, in order to get a move on. He liked Mr. Asquith, but he was indecisive and behaved more like a judge than a president who is leading a war policy. He heard discussions and generally decided by what appeared to be the opinion of the majority, although it might be quite wrong. Sir William said that the only man who could decide quickly, say "Yes" or "No" without hesitation, was Lloyd George. He might say the wrong "Yes" or the wrong "No" sometimes, but he much preferred that to no decision at all. He was in favour of some arrangement which gave Mr. Lloyd George greater power. He did not mean greater power to interfere with military operations, but greater power in the direction of war policy.

During the afternoon I called on Mr. Bonar Law at the Colonial Office. He was rather despondent. He said that

the more he saw of the war the less confident he was to predict what would happen. He had made up his mind that some change must take place here. The War Council had grown too big and too clumsy in its methods. He was quite convinced from his point of view, and from his knowledge, that things could not go on as they were.

I told him that I had contemplated pointing out the need of more energetic methods, and the creation of a smaller and more businesslike War Council.

He suggested that I should see Mr. Asquith on Monday, as soon as he returned to London.

I told him that I was not in the habit of seeing the Prime Minister ; the danger was that if I did so, our liberty of action would be restrained. We could not very well publish articles, after such an interview, on lines which the Prime Minister might think undesirable. But I said I would try to use Mr. Asquith. As a matter of fact, I did telephone to Mr. Bonham-Carter, but decided, as it was difficult to see the Prime Minister that day or even the next day, that it would be inadvisable to see him before we published an article.

Mr. Bonar Law said he had no scheme to propose just then, but he was going to think very hard over the matter during the week-end and would see Mr. Asquith on Monday or Tuesday, and tell him that things could not go on as they were.

At this time, as has been revealed by Lord Beaverbrook and others, proposals for the formation of a War Council within the Cabinet were already being discussed by the principal Ministers. Interested parties were holding secret meetings ; "soundings" were being made. Without knowledge of these developments, Donald caused to be published in the *Daily Chronicle* an article strongly critical of the direction of the war. This article was intended, says Donald, "to stimulate Mr. Asquith and to assist him in carrying through reforms, as we

feared, unless he, on his own initiative, acted, the parliamentary Opposition would become so powerful that he would be forced to give way and to make humiliating concessions."

Published on Wednesday, November 29th, 1916, under the title: "The Trials of the Coalition" the article declared:

We were not originally favourable to the formation of a Coalition Ministry, but ever since it was formed we have supported it, because in its very nature it can hardly be replaced during the war without national dissension and grave international peril. Nevertheless unless it shows more grip than it latterly has, it seems to us in serious danger of coming to grief in spite of the absence of an alternative.

The Ministry's arch-defect is inability to make up its mind. It is not so much that it reaches wrong decisions, as that for weeks and even months, it fails in crucial matter after crucial matter, to reach any decision at all.

After observing that any number of instances might be cited, the article catalogued seven examples of "urgency disregarded," and these without touching upon great questions of war policy. "And, let nobody fancy that we have exhausted our quiver."

The War Cabinet, the article continued, had become a clumsy machine, without capacity for quick decision; but no remedy could be discerned in "mere changes of personnel." The War Cabinet should be reduced to four, including Mr. Asquith, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Lloyd George; and it should have the widest powers of prompt action in conjunction with the Admiralty and the General Staff.

On that prophetic suggestion, the *Daily Chronicle* terminated a long and vigorous article.

This article was in the editions sold on the morning of November 29th. On the afternoon of that day the *Westminster Gazette* also published an article expressing somewhat similar views. This coincidence (for such it was) caused Donald,

many months afterwards, to inquire of the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, Mr. J. A. Spender, how the *Westminster* article came to be written.

“Some of our friends,” added Donald, “thought there was collusion between us, which, as you know, was not the case. My article has been in process of incubation for about a week or so. I knew that a movement was going on in favour of a reconstruction of the War Council, and that it would be forced by the resignation of either Lloyd George or Bonar Law, or both. As that movement had been at work ever since the debate on the Nigerian properties,<sup>1</sup> the War Council was not likely to be made a more efficient body in the meantime. I concluded that if Asquith did not reform his own house it would fall about his ears. Our article, therefore, while critical, was designed to be friendly criticism, although I believe it was not accepted as such, either by Asquith’s side or by Lloyd George’s. We received protests from some of the Whips about it, and I know that Lloyd George seized on it to enforce his demands. Your article, coming on the top of ours, greatly strengthened his hand.”

To Donald’s inquiry, Mr. Spender replied :

“I had no prompting except my own unaided wits. I saw another tornado coming and tried to get in front of it. No complaint was made to me by anybody.

Possibly, if I had realized how much some of the deadlocks were contributed to by the motive which you conjecture, I should have worded what I wrote a little differently. But whatever the motive, it was necessary for friendly journalists to say that the consequences would be what they were, unless the old Government could shake itself loose and get out of the trap.”

<sup>1</sup> A debate notable for the fact that when the House divided sixty-five Unionists voted against the Government, of which their leader (Bonar Law) was a member.

The effect of the *Daily Chronicle* article was considerable. It was freely quoted in other newspapers and was interpreted by some commentators as a revolt against Asquith in a quarter which hitherto had been scrupulously loyal to him. The feeling it created within the Asquithian camp is indicated by a note made at the time by the then parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, the late Harry Jones. Within a few hours of the publication of the article, Jones met, in the House of Commons, one of the Liberal Whips. This member expressed surprise that the *Daily Chronicle* had joined in the attack on the Government. Jones replied that "our desire was, by helpful criticism, to strengthen the Government's hands, not to embarrass it." The Whip admitted that there was justification for some of the *Chronicle's* criticisms, but added, "There is a dirty intrigue on against the P.M. I hope the *Chronicle* is not in it. . . . Your article, coming now, will encourage the plotters."

One immediate result of the article was a message to Donald from Lord Fisher saying he wished to see Donald on "a very urgent and important matter." Donald called on the Admiral, and Fisher began by a reference to the article, but soon launched into the subjects of Admiral Jellicoe's appointment to the Admiralty, of the rival merits of Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty, and ending on his favourite topic of the necessity of a landing on the Baltic coast of Germany.

Among Donald's memoranda on the political crisis the next note of importance is :

*Friday, 1st December, 1916.*

Called by appointment on Mr. Bonar Law. One of his first questions was whether I had seen Mr. Lloyd George. I said I had not. I referred to the article which the *Daily Chronicle* had published on the 29th, and said that I had decided not to go and see the Prime Minister before writing, as it might have limited our point of view. He said that was quite right. I asked him if any progress had

been made with regard to the smaller War Council. He said they were thinking about it. One thing he was very anxious about was that nothing should be done to humiliate the Prime Minister. He wanted a plan carried through which would leave the Prime Minister's ultimate authority untouched.

Discussing the personnel of the proposed smaller Council, he said that he objected to Mr. Balfour ; he was too much like Mr. Asquith ; indecisive. I said that, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he ought to be a member. Mr. Bonar Law hinted that it might be necessary to remove him from that position. He said nothing to my remark that perhaps he and Mr. Balfour would change places. He also strongly objected to Mr. McKenna, and said that it would be necessary to have Carson as a member, otherwise his difficulties would not be removed (referring to the position in the House of Commons). Mr. Bonar Law said nothing about the presence of a Labour member. Mr. Lloyd George would be chairman, in the absence of the Prime Minister.

With regard to Carson, he said on a former occasion, that it was always galling to him to know that the men now supporting Carson were the men who backed him for the leadership of the party and had been his steadfast friends.

*Saturday, 2nd December.*

I dined with Mr. T. P. O'Connor and Mr. Dillon at "Winddale," Walton Heath, on Saturday evening, and discussed the possibility of a smaller War Council. Both considered that Mr. Asquith should not be chairman ; they also opposed the presence of Mr. Balfour. Mr. Bonar Law was weak, and they would not have Sir Edward Carson at any price. As a matter of fact, what it came down to was, that the only member they approved of was Mr. Lloyd George. They had been spending the after-

noon with Mr. Lloyd George, and complained that the Prime Minister did not use the men of action which he had with him. (T. P. told me on Friday, the 10th Dec., that he gathered that what Mr. Lloyd George wanted was a "One man" War Council.)

*Sunday, 3rd December.*

On Sunday, December 3rd, 1916, the Unionist members of the Cabinet, with the exception of Mr. Balfour, met at Mr. Bonar Law's house. They passed a resolution suggesting that the Prime Minister should resign, which meant, of course, that the whole Government should resign; and if he did not do so, they would.

Mr. Bonar Law was deputed to take the resolution to the Prime Minister and to explain that the object in view was not to embarrass him, but to help him. The Prime Minister, apparently, did not see how their action could help him, and it was thought that the matter was not quite clearly explained to him. Lord Curzon and some other Unionist members also saw Mr. Asquith and pointed out to him the advantages of the policy which they suggested. It was quite evident that the purpose of the Unionists was to give the Prime Minister a free hand in reconstructing his Government.

*Sunday, 3rd December.*

I saw Mr. Bonham-Carter,<sup>1</sup> in the evening, when the Prime Minister was discussing the situation with Mr. Lloyd George. A little later Mr. Bonar Law called on the Prime Minister. He saw him alone at first and then the three had a long conference which lasted nearly three hours. At that time Mr. Bonham-Carter hoped that an arrangement could be arrived at, but he had no knowledge of what the three were discussing. Later it appeared that the subject of discussion was the proposal which Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Then Private Secretary to Mr. Asquith, now Sir Maurice Bonham-Carter.

Lloyd George had submitted on Friday. I was an hour with Bonham-Carter, but could not wait to see the Prime Minister. I spoke to Bonham-Carter later on the telephone and gathered that the situation was hopeful and the prospect of an agreement good.

*Monday, 4th December.*

When I saw Mr. Bonham-Carter in the afternoon, he indicated that the Prime Minister was very much distressed by the article which appeared in *The Times* that morning, which, he said, made an arrangement almost impossible. It looked then as if a plan was being matured to get rid of the Prime Minister or to humiliate him altogether.

*Tuesday, 5th December.*

Sir George Riddell telephoned in the morning to say that things were very bad, that the "old man" had gone back on his written word, had given himself away altogether, and that Mr. Lloyd George was going to resign.

Later Sir George Riddell telephoned to say that the Prime Minister was going to accept Lloyd George's terms and be simply a member of the War Committee.

*Wednesday, 6th December.*

On Wednesday night Sir George Riddell telephoned to say that Mr. Lloyd George had wished him to let me know that he was forming a Government and that he was confident of getting Labour to join him. Lloyd George had gone to his (Riddell's) house in Queen Anne's Gate for dinner after he had returned from the Palace. Lloyd George said that unless something were done we should be faced with a terrible disaster, etc.

Donald's most interesting interviews, however, occurred after Asquith had resigned. Between December 7th and the end of the month, he discussed events in turn with Asquith,



Lloyd George, and Bonar Law. The talk with Asquith occurred on the day after the resignation, and the following is Donald's full note of the conversation.

*7th December, 1916.*

I called on Mr. Asquith at 10, Downing Street, at 4 o'clock. He was sitting at the large table in the Cabinet room, his back to the fire. He looked a very lonely figure and a tired man. Lying in front of him were a few letters, just received from political friends. He had a quiet and severe expression.

I asked him for his version of the negotiations which had been going on. We began talking of Mr. Lloyd George, and I asked if he thought, as it seemed on the surface, that Mr. Lloyd George, or somebody in his interest, had been preparing for the failure in the negotiations which had occurred and for the removal of himself as Prime Minister.

He said that Mr. Lloyd George had always professed to be most friendly with him and no rift had occurred in their personal relations. He had the greatest admiration for him. Lloyd George possessed unique gifts, a real flare for politics, foresight, inspiration, etc. He would not say that Lloyd George owed everything to him, but he certainly owed a great deal. He saved him during the Budget of 1909, when all the Cabinet turned against him, and he came to his rescue and risked his own fate with Lloyd George's (see Lloyd George's reference to this remark). There was another occasion, better known, upon which he prevented Lloyd George from having to disappear for a time from public life. (Mr. Asquith was no doubt referring to the Marconi incident.)

Mr. Asquith had been convinced for some time that the War Council had become too cumbersome and that a more workmanlike body was necessary. Representations had been made to him, both by Mr. Bonar Law and Mr.

Lloyd George. He had discussed the subject with both of them, but nothing definite had been arrived at and no workable plan had been produced.

Mr. Asquith went to Walmer for the week-end. Hearing that developments were taking place the Prime Minister motored to Downing Street from Walmer on Sunday, and sent for Mr. Bonar Law and for Mr. Lloyd George. (Bonar Law had seen him earlier, to convey to him the resolution of the Unionist members, but the Prime Minister asked him to think that the resolution had not been delivered.) They then discussed the scheme for the smaller War Council. Most of the suggestions came from Mr. Asquith and subsequently were referred to in a letter which he sent to Mr. Lloyd George. There was practically no difference of opinion as to the general scheme. The Prime Minister, of course, was to be a member of the Council and to attend as often as he could. As a matter of course he could not attend all the meetings, because the idea was that the Council should meet daily; in his absence Mr. Lloyd George was to be chairman. A strong difference of opinion developed on the suggested personnel of the Council, and that matter was left over for adjustment on Monday.

On Monday the Prime Minister saw an article in *The Times*, stating that the proposal was to exclude him from the War Council altogether; the personnel was suggested, and other information given which could only have emanated directly or indirectly from Mr. Lloyd George.<sup>1</sup> This revelation led to the suggestion that the one purpose in view was to humiliate the Prime Minister and to place him in a position which could only have led to more embittered attacks and increasing insults. His position

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs*, Volume 2, says: "I had not communicated any information as to the negotiations which were going on with Mr. Asquith or the agreement arrived at with him to the editor of that paper, either directly or indirectly."

would have been made untenable. He wrote to Mr. Lloyd George saying that he feared that the statement in *The Times* would make any rearrangement difficult, if not impossible. He then recounted in writing, for the first time, what "the suggested arrangement" was, writing in the past tense, and using the word "suggested" as no agreement had been arrived at and no definite arrangement settled. Mr. Lloyd George replied during the morning that he had not read *The Times* and asked the Prime Minister not to close the negotiations because of what had happened.

Later in the day, the Prime Minister saw Lord Grey, Mr. McKenna, Mr. Runciman and some other friends. He gave the subject further thought, and on Monday night sent a letter to Mr. Lloyd George closing the negotiations, and leaving the Minister for War no option but to resign.

Mr. Asquith explained why he objected to the personnel of the Council, as proposed by Mr. Lloyd George. The whole proposal of creating a smaller War Council was, he said, to make it more efficient for running the war. Mr. Lloyd George was the most eminently qualified person to be on the board and the best fitted to take the chair in the absence of the Prime Minister. He was entitled to do so because of the position he occupied and because of the great part which he played in the war previously as Chancellor of the Exchequer and as Minister of Munitions.

As regards Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Asquith said he was on the War Council, not in virtue of any office he held, or of any ability which he possessed, or for his knowledge about the war, but because he was the leader of the Conservative Party. He had nothing to say against him; he had accepted him because of the position he held, but he did not consider that he had shown any great qualities in helping them to run the war. He was afraid to take

decisive action, was very timid, and always showed up better in the House of Commons than he did in Council. Mr. Asquith said he had a very great personal regard for Mr. Bonar Law, who had been most loyal and friendly to him, and he appreciated his high character and personal qualities more the longer he knew him. Mr. Asquith believed that he had been a very good iron-master who had come into political life late, and had shown no qualities which entitled him to occupy a commanding position.

As regards Sir Edward Carson, Mr. Asquith would not have him at any price. He ruled him out at once. He said that his would be purely a political appointment, less justified than Mr. Bonar Law's. Sir Edward Carson had been in the Cabinet for six months, during which time he had shown no initiative, had made no helpful suggestions, and really was a disappointment to his friends. He had been a personal friend of Mr. Asquith for many years, but judging the War Council purely from the point of view of efficiency he considered that Sir Edward Carson's presence would be a drag, and could not be justified.

The inclusion of a Labour member was also purely political, with no reference to the knowledge which the member possessed, or his capacity to help them in running the war. Mr. Henderson had been mentioned, but he failed entirely to pass any test which could be applied to a member of a War Council, except as a delegate of Labour. The body which Mr. Lloyd George proposed was, then, acceptable as regards the number, but, with the exception of the Prime Minister and himself, it was far less efficient than the existing War Council. Mr. Asquith said that the personnel of the new Council was a body *pour rire*. In regard to himself, every personal consideration would induce him to retire. He had had two and a half years of very strenuous work in a difficult position and he said he was almost *au bout de mes forces*. If he had accepted the part in the new War Council

which was evidently destined for him, his life would have been intolerable. The attacks upon him would have been renewed, and, after a gradual process of humiliation, he would have had to retire.

The personnel of the proposed Council had not been seriously discussed, except with regard to Mr. Balfour. Mr. Asquith said that he insisted that Mr. Balfour, as head of the Admiralty, should be a member. He objected strongly to his removal. Mr. Balfour had just carried through a most difficult scheme of reorganization.

Mr. Asquith, for many months, had been very anxious to get Jellicoe to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord. After the Battle of Jutland the relations between Jellicoe and Beatty became so strained, each with their strong partisans, that it was extremely difficult to make a change. Mr. Balfour went to Edinburgh, and it was due to his tact and skill that he succeeded in getting Jellicoe to come to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord ; which was not so difficult, it appeared, as to get Jellicoe to consent to placing Beatty in command of the Grand Fleet. Mr. Asquith considered that Beatty had his limitations, but, granted that Jellicoe had to go to the Admiralty, he believed that Beatty was the next best man to command the Grand Fleet. To have removed Mr. Balfour from the Admiralty after he had accomplished this work would have been most unjust and would have had a bad effect on the Service. Mr. Asquith considered that the Navy liked Mr. Balfour. They did not like Mr. Churchill, and were not too fond of Mr. McKenna, although he worked loyally with them. Mr. Asquith felt that it would be disastrous if Lord Fisher were brought back to the Admiralty.

Mr. Asquith spoke with great bitterness with regard to the calumnious and unscrupulous campaign which had been directed against him and his colleagues. He seemed to be more concerned for his colleagues than for himself,

I pointed out that he had shown always great toleration and generosity, and he said that perhaps he had erred too much in that direction ; but he was always anxious to consider others, and had accepted many proposals simply from a desire to bring about conciliation and unity. He said that he could not have joined Mr. Bonar Law's government unless he could have brought his friends with him, referring to Lord Grey, Mr. McKenna, Mr. Runciman, and also Mr. Balfour.

Although it seemed then that Mr. Lloyd George would succeed in forming his government, it was very doubtful whether it would last long, and in that case I presumed that he, Mr. Asquith, would be sent for again. I asked him what his attitude would then be towards Mr. Lloyd George and others.

He said, with a good deal of animation and firmness, " then Mr. Lloyd George would have to come in on *my* terms." My impression was that Mr. Asquith was quite convinced that Mr. Lloyd George could not form a stable government.

Mr. Asquith was evidently not in touch with public opinion, and had only prejudiced sources of information. He complained of the Press attacks, but he never took any account of the Press himself. He maintained a curious aloofness and regarded newspapers as not being of much account. He took no pains, either personally or through his secretaries, to keep in touch with newspapers which were his supporters. They had to support him in the dark.

Some years ago, before the war, I wrote asking if I could see him for a few minutes. His secretary replied asking what I wanted to see him about. I did not answer, and I forget what the subject was ; but I must have considered it important, or I would not have asked to see him. Although I have written to him on several occasions, I never again asked to see him.

The next interview of which Donald made a memorandum was with Mr. (now Sir Maurice) Bonham-Carter, who was Private Secretary to Asquith for many years and was in the closest touch with the Prime Minister during the crisis.

Donald's note of his conversation was as follows :

*20th December, 1916.*

Mr. M. Bonham-Carter to-day gave me his version of the course of events during the critical period.

Mr. Lloyd George submitted his first statement of what he desired in the way of a War Committee on Friday, December 1st. He did not write a letter, but brought a few notes with him and placed his plan before the Prime Minister. The essential feature of his scheme was that there should be a War Committee of three, including the Minister for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty. The third member was not mentioned. The Prime Minister was not to be a member. Bonham-Carter thought that Lloyd George had himself in view as Chairman ; the others would probably be Mr. Bonar Law, and Sir Edward Carson—one or other of whom would go to the Admiralty instead of Mr. Balfour.

There had been some talk earlier in the week with regard to remodelling the War Committee—a change which Mr. Asquith was quite ready to make. He, however, turned down Mr. Lloyd George's plan, on Friday night. He left for Walmer on Saturday morning.

On Saturday, rumours were current that Mr. Lloyd George proposed to resign, and were more definitely announced in some Sunday newspapers. The Prime Minister had also heard of a meeting of the Unionist Party.

He returned from Walmer to Downing Street on Sunday evening. He saw both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law, together and also separately. It was at this meeting that a new plan was evolved. Mr. Lloyd

George brought some points, and the Prime Minister added others, and at the end of the evening there was practically no difference with regard to the constitution of the new War Committee. Mr. Lloyd George was to be working chairman ; the Prime Minister would attend when he could. It was not discussed whether he would on those occasions occupy the chair or not, as it was taken as a matter of course that, when present, he would be in the chair. The situation, therefore, on Sunday evening was hopeful. The difficult question of personnel had not been seriously tackled, except that the Prime Minister strongly opposed the suggestion that Mr. Balfour should be removed from the Admiralty.

Mr. Asquith had a visit during the evening from the anti-George members of the Conservative Party, who explained that their resolution asking him to resign was intended to be helpful—to give him a free hand in a reconstruction scheme. Curzon was one of the Ministers referred to.

Mr. Lloyd George, before he left on Sunday evening, mentioned to Mr. Bonham-Carter that his idea was that Carson should be a member, and also Henderson. This was the first time that Labour had been mentioned. I gathered that this point had not been seriously discussed, except in a general way, with Mr. Asquith.

The whole situation was changed on Monday morning, when it was obvious that the most confidential matters discussed on the previous evening had been conveyed to *The Times*. A new plan was disclosed in *The Times*, the effect of which would have been to humiliate the Prime Minister and to give a stimulus to the campaign of abuse of Ministers, which had been carried on so long. Upon this the Prime Minister wrote to Lloyd George, saying that, in view of what had appeared in *The Times*, he feared it was impossible for them to arrive at any understanding ; he questioned that any scheme would be poss-



ible. He then wrote what the "suggested arrangements" were, and referred to the proposed constitution and functions of the new Committee as "suggested" the previous night. Mr. Lloyd George replied during the day that he had not seen *The Times* and he was not responsible for what Northcliffe did. Northcliffe was out to smash the Government, and Lord Derby and he (Mr. Lloyd George) wanted to save it. I gathered that Mr. Lloyd George expressed some hope that it was still possible to arrive at an agreement and said that he was ready to resume negotiations at the stage they had been left on Sunday night. Mr. Asquith, in view of this letter from Lloyd George, considered the matter again, but finally came to the conclusion that he would only be seeking more trouble if he proceeded with it. This conviction was not affected by his conversation later in the day with McKenna, Grey, Crewe, Harcourt, and Runciman. Their opinions only strengthened him in the conclusions at which he had arrived. He then wrote a letter to Lloyd George, which left him no alternative but to resign.

Mr. Bonham-Carter thought that the reason why the Conservatives joined the Lloyd George Government was that they had come to the conclusion that he would form a Government in any case.

Mr. Asquith was rather hurt on realizing that Mr. Balfour had left the Admiralty and was joining the Lloyd George government. Mr. Asquith was prepared to reject Mr. Lloyd George's proposal solely on the question of the retention of Mr. Balfour at the Admiralty. He felt that, while Jackson and Mr. Balfour were a good combination, Jellicoe and Balfour would be better. There was also Balfour's loyalty to Asquith and his success in bringing about the change at the Admiralty. Asquith feared that without Balfour at the Admiralty, at any rate for some time to come, strong personal antagonisms might develop to the detriment of naval efficiency.

The Prime Minister was kept in touch with the trend of Lloyd George's policy through Mr. Montagu and the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Reading).

Unfortunately, Donald's memorandum of his talk with the new Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, lacks the day of the month on which it occurred, but an allusion to propaganda suggests that it occurred towards the end of the month for, early in January, Donald took up, at the Prime Minister's request, the question of British propaganda in neutral countries. Donald's memorandum reads :

*? December.*

Mr. Lloyd George asked me to call and see him at Downing Street to invite me to report on propaganda. It was the first time I had spoken to him since May, when our relations became strained on account of my attitude about the conditions of his appointment as War Minister. After discussing propaganda, our conversation turned on the recent crisis.

Mr. Lloyd George told me that Mr. Asquith had himself acknowledged that it was impossible for him to direct the war and also to carry on his duties as Prime Minister, as things were. He quite realized the situation. They were in perfect agreement on Sunday night (Dec. 3rd, 1916). Mr. Asquith went to dinner at Mr. Montagu's and it was felt that the crisis was over. Mr. Lloyd George at one time thought, like his colleagues, that Mr. Asquith was essential to national unity. His relations with Mr. Asquith had always been friendly, and were so up to the last. I said that Mr. Asquith mentioned to me that he was the only man in the Cabinet who had supported Mr. Lloyd George in his Budget of 1909. To that Mr. Lloyd George replied that this Budget saved the Liberal Government and the Party. Mr. Asquith, he said, was shrewd enough to recognize that.

Mr. Lloyd George said that if things had gone on as they were going we should have lost the war within a few months.

A series of letters passed between Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George during the crisis. Mr. Lloyd George allowed me to read them all.<sup>1</sup>

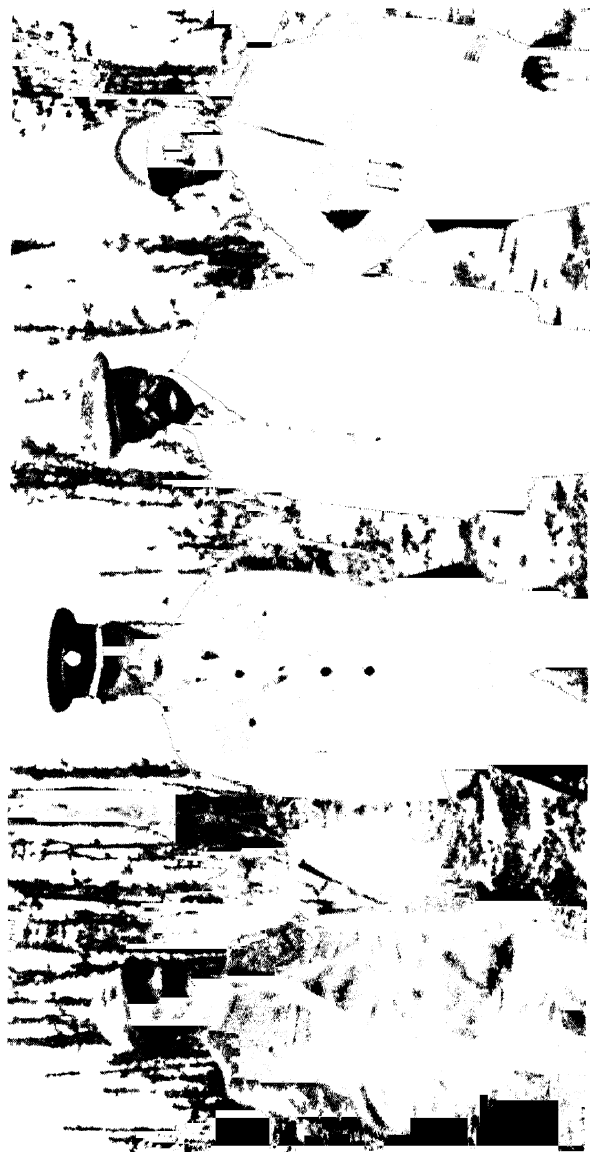
During the closing days of December, Donald had a long conversation with Bonar Law, now installed as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. Of this talk, Donald has left the following note :

*29th December, 1916.*

When I saw Mr. Bonar Law for a few minutes on Friday, December 1st, he said he would like to tell me the whole story of the crisis. I saw him by appointment to-day. I had discussed the question of propaganda and one or two other matters first before he reminded me that he wished to tell me what happened in connection with the reconstruction of the Government. He said it was a very interesting story. He was sorry he did not make notes of things at the time, as a great deal depended not only on days, but on hours. He continued :

“ I had felt for some time that the Coalition was not going well. The thing which brought the matter finally to a head, so far as I was concerned, was the debate on the sale of German properties in Nigeria, on Nov. 8th. My friends and Liberals told me that I had scored a great parliamentary triumph ; but I knew better. There were sixty-five of my party against me. They were the men who had formerly been my staunchest supporters. The Nigerian debate was simply a symptom of discontent with the Coalition, rather than hostility to myself.

<sup>1</sup> The memorandum proceeds to summarize the correspondence, but as the letters have been reproduced many times the précis of them is omitted.



# ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Robert Donald and Sir Arthur C. Macdonald with French officer in the Argonne sector



"I told the Prime Minister soon afterwards that something would have to be done. A little later I met Carson behind the Speaker's chair, and asked him to come to my room, where we had a talk. He was quite friendly. He was absolutely hostile to the Government, and convinced that the Coalition could not get on with the war successfully as things were. I said that there should be a smaller and more businesslike War Council. He agreed. We did not discuss the question of personnel. I said that Mr. Asquith was indispensable to the unity of the nation. (In this, as events have proved, I was wrong.) Carson agreed that Asquith was essential.

"I then got to work to consider what should be done. This must have been the last week of November. Max Aitken suggested that I should see Lloyd George. I was quite willing to do so. We had a meeting with Carson. By this time I had got a scheme sketched out. My idea was a War Council consisting of Ministers without portfolios, with the Prime Minister as President and Mr. Lloyd George as Chairman. It was not assumed that the Prime Minister would be able to attend frequently, but when he was present he would take the chair, otherwise Lloyd George would be permanent chairman. I did not discuss the question of personnel. Both Lloyd George and Carson considered that Balfour would not do. They evidently thought that he was too much of the same type as Asquith, with regard to making up his mind and arriving at decisions. I would not discuss Mr. Balfour's position; I said that I would not be a party to his removal and I would not take his place at the Admiralty.

"I went to Mr. Asquith with my scheme, and pointed out to him that unless he acted on his own initiative things would get serious. If he acted then he would get the credit for remodelling the machinery for running the war, but, if he delayed, criticism might lead to an agitation and he would be forced to act and thus find

himself in a humiliating position. It was quite evident that Mr. Asquith did not realize the seriousness of the position. This must have been, I think, about the 28th November. (The *Daily Chronicle* article appeared on the 29th.) He evidently feared that my proposal would injure his prestige as Prime Minister, and he was probably anxious about the attitude of Mr. Lloyd George when he assumed what was practically the chief part in the direction of the war. I said to him that he had arranged difficult situations before, and referred chaffingly to the question of my claim to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer when the Coalition was formed. Mr. Asquith did not, however, accept my scheme.

"Mr. Lloyd George saw him, I think, on the 30th, and had a discussion. There did not seem to be any serious disagreement. I was in communication with my Unionist colleagues on the subject. On Friday, Dec. 1st, Mr. Lloyd George produced a scheme, without going into the question of personnel, and providing for a War Council of only three, without the Prime Minister being a member. This committee was to consist of the Minister for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and another not named.

"By this date rumours of coming trouble had got abroad. The question of Mr. Lloyd George's resignation was mooted, and I feared that the time for reconstruction under Mr. Asquith had become too late. Mr. Asquith went to Walmer on Saturday morning (Dec. 2nd). I called a meeting of my Unionist colleagues in the Cabinet at my house on Sunday morning, and put the position before them. They agreed with me that the best policy was for Mr. Asquith to resign, or at any rate for them to resign, so that Mr. Asquith could have the question of reconstruction entirely in his own hands. Our attitude was not intended to be hostile to the Prime Minister ; on the contrary.

"I went with the paper which we had drawn up and saw him early in the afternoon, on his return from Walmer. He did not like our proposals, and asked me to consider that the paper had not been delivered. I, therefore, did not deliver it.

"I saw my colleagues again that day and we became anxious about the position.

"I told the Prime Minister he should see Lloyd George. He sent for him. We both saw the Prime Minister, separately and together, and we arrived at practically an agreement with regard to the constitution and functions of the new Council. Mr. Asquith had not accepted Mr. Lloyd George's scheme, but we three thrashed out a scheme which met with his approval. We did not discuss the question of personnel, except that he indicated he did not approve of our suggestions.

"There the matter rested on Sunday night, leaving the question of personnel for settlement. The outlook was favourable. The constitution and functions of the new War Council had been agreed upon. The position and authority of the Prime Minister in regard to the Council had been agreed upon.

"On Monday Mr. Asquith was much disturbed by the article in *The Times*, and then wrote to Mr. Lloyd George turning his proposal down. This refers to Mr. Asquith's letter which he read almost in full at the Reform Club meeting. Before setting out the points of the agreement on Sunday night he had used the phrase 'The suggested arrangements were . . .'

"I still thought that, in spite of this most unfortunate disturbance of the negotiations, the situation could be saved. I called on Monday afternoon at 10 Downing Street. Lord Crewe, Mr. Runciman, and Mr. Harcourt were waiting to see the Prime Minister. When I went in I found McKenna with him. I told him that, whatever he did, not to fall between two stools, and indicated



that I thought there was still a chance for him to keep the Government together, if he acted promptly. On Tuesday morning Mr. Lloyd George telephoned to me to go to the War Office, to show me the letter which he had received from the Prime Minister. I thought it was better that I should not be seen about the War Office, and asked Mr. Lloyd George to send the letter to me and I would look at it. This was the letter completely turning down the whole scheme and leaving Mr. Lloyd George no option but to resign."

Mr. Bonar Law agreed that the Prime Minister had changed his attitude. He had not broken his written word, but he had gone back on the agreement arrived at by the three of them on Sunday night, with regard to the constitution and functions of the War Council.

The change of attitude of the Prime Minister was brought about, not only by what had appeared in *The Times*, but partly on account of communications received from the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Reading) and Mr. Montagu. These two were apparently acting as intermediaries between the Prime Minister and Mr. Lloyd George, conveying to the Prime Minister what they thought Lloyd George was thinking, and telling Lloyd George what the attitude of the Prime Minister was. Both were exceedingly anxious to keep the Coalition in power and to maintain the association between the Prime Minister and Mr. Lloyd George.

I told Mr. Bonar Law that Mr. Lloyd George's secretaries had been very busy communicating to the Press during the crisis, and that Mr. Lloyd George himself had seen a number of newspaper men. Mr. Bonar Law said he feared that something of the kind was going on, and he was sorry. Lloyd George agreed that Balfour would be the most suitable man for the Foreign Office, and commissioned Mr. Bonar Law to broach the subject to Mr. Balfour. Mr. Bonar Law went to Mr. Balfour

and put the proposal before him. At first Mr. Balfour did not like giving up the Admiralty ; he said it looked very much like putting a pistol at his head, but he was attracted by the offer of the Foreign Office and, after a little consideration, accepted. Mr. Bonar Law said that this was a very noble act on Mr. Balfour's part. The presence of Mr. Balfour at the Foreign Office retained Lord Robert Cecil.

Mr. Bonar Law said that he did not believe that during the crisis Mr. Lloyd George was planning to displace the Prime Minister, or even wanted it done. He wished to work with Mr. Asquith. They all believed that Mr. Asquith was necessary to national unity, and they were working towards maintaining him as the head of the Government.

After considering Donald's reports of the views of Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, and Bonar Law, it is fitting that another statesman who followed them into the office of Prime Minister should enter into the narrative. In 1916, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was out of harmony with most of his colleagues of the parliamentary Labour Party, and the possibility of his becoming the first Labour Prime Minister scarcely entered the mind of any responsible observer of political events. The attitude of the country towards him was reflected in the first electoral contest after the war, when he experienced a crushing defeat and was unable for some time to find a constituency that would return him. Throughout this dark period of MacDonald's career, and although differing profoundly from his views, Donald maintained his friendship with the Labour leader. They breakfasted together fairly regularly at Donald's house in Taviton Street, and of one of these meetings Donald wrote as follows :

*13th December, 1916.*

Mr. MacDonald had breakfast with me and gave me an account of the interview between the Labour members

and Mr. Lloyd George. Lord Derby was with Mr. Lloyd George when they were received at the War Office. Mr. Lloyd George spoke for about forty minutes, and described in very vague and general terms what his scheme was with regard to Labour. He referred to the mobilization of men for agriculture; the control of mines, and the taking over of shipping. He devoted a good deal of attention to the importance of keeping pigs. He said that the refuse of London could be used for feeding pigs. He told them about the condition of the country and the state of war. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Sidney Webb were present, as well as Philip Snowden, and some others who did not agree with Lloyd George, and they asked numerous questions, endeavouring to pin the new Prime Minister down to definite promises. He declined, however, to be caught. When he was asked, for instance, what he meant by the "control of coal mines" he did not say definitely; nor did he answer definitely questions about the treatment of labour. He was exceedingly amiable, but excessively indefinite. He was like a bit of mercury; when you thought you had caught him he darted off to something else; when pressed with questions from MacDonald or Sidney Webb he avoided coming to close quarters, by a diversion. The majority of the Labour members were greatly impressed by the conversation. The first man to whom Mr. MacDonald spoke was J. H. Thomas. MacDonald told him he thought it was a poor performance. Thomas said he did not agree; he was very much impressed by what Mr. Lloyd George had said and thought that they all ought to work for the nation. MacDonald assented, but asked how—for the day or the morrow? . . .

Thomas informed MacDonald later that he had declined the most important office that Labour could occupy in the new Government. MacDonald congratulated him. He regarded Thomas as the strongest

man among the Trade Union leaders in the Labour movement.

Mr. Lloyd George was very amiable to MacDonald personally, and jocularly remarked that he might have to put him in prison, but he hoped he would come and breakfast with him the day he came out. Discussing Lloyd George's future, Mr. MacDonald said that he quite realized the possibility of his becoming the leader of the Labour Party.

Soon after the change of government, Donald met the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Robertson, and made the following note of the conversation :

*Monday, 18th December, 1916.*

I had half an hour's talk with General Sir William Robertson, whom I had not seen since the political upheaval. He told me at once that the General Staff had been charged with interfering in politics, and with having inspired the articles which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* criticizing the general conduct of the war. ("Trials of the Coalition," Nov. 29th, and "A Smaller War Council," Nov. 30th.) He said that General X was supposed to be the culprit. It seems that when the advocacy of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law in favour of a smaller War Council became critical, Mr. Asquith informed Lord Stamfordham that the General Staff had been interfering in politics and had inspired the articles referred to. Lord Stamfordham told the King and the King sent for Sir William Robertson. . . .

General X (who was with us) told me that he was charged with writing the second short article, entitled "A Smaller War Council." He said he agreed with every word of it, but had nothing to do with it. . . . X said he had been present at one War Committee. He said he had never heard people talk such a lot of rot.

They wasted a long time in discussion and arrived at no decision whatever. The only man who was at all business like and to the point was Mr. Montagu, whom he much regretted had not remained in the Government. (General Robertson held the same view with regard to Montagu.)

Robertson seemed to be of opinion that there was a system of espionage carried on from 10 Downing Street. He said that he had been suspected because he had breakfasted one morning with Lloyd George, Lord Derby, and Sir Edward Carson. As a matter of fact he had accepted the invitation to breakfast with Lloyd George as it was an occasion when they had a little leisure and opportunity to discuss business. Lord Derby was present for the same reason. It was pure coincidence that Sir Edward Carson turned up. He said that this meeting was known at 10 Downing Street an hour after breakfast.

On the general question of the new conditions, Robertson said that he liked the change. Mr. Lloyd George was rather a difficult man to get on with, but he had "go" and the power of decision. The only great danger he could see was that Mr. Lloyd George would be in a hurry to get victories. He had told him that we must wait patiently, and that we are not likely to have victories for several months. On the other hand Lloyd George thought that victories were necessary to keep the Government together and the country in good spirit. "We cannot," said Robertson, "do the impossible. Although Mr. Lloyd George knows the conditions on the Western Front in winter, and that any advance on our part is impossible, he would like to see us try to get victories somewhere else. He is not so keen on the Salonica expedition as he was. He realizes the increasing difficulties of transport,"

The next interview recorded did not take place until the events to which it relates were two months old. In this instance, Donald's informant was Edwin Montagu, who, during the political crisis, had acted as liaison officer between the Asquith and the Lloyd George camps. Donald's note of the conversation is as follows :

*27th February, 1917.*

Lunched with Mr. E. S. Montagu. The proposal made with regard to the new War Council, when it was first brought to Mr. Montagu's notice, was that it should consist of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, and himself. He at once wrote to the Prime Minister, saying that he had heard of this, but he would accept no position in a War Council of which he (Mr. Asquith) was not the head, except on his express instructions. This was a modification of the Council proposed by Mr. Lloyd George on the 1st December. Mr. Lloyd George's proposal was that there should be three members, but another Liberal was added so as to hold the balance. Asquith did not agree to this proposal.

Montagu hoped that the Prime Minister and Lloyd George would remain in London during the week-end, so as to be ready for any developments. The Prime Minister went to Walmer, chiefly with the intention of seeing Carson, who was supposed to be at Dover, but who, as a matter of fact, had not left London. Mr. Lloyd George contemplated resignation on Saturday. Montagu realized that the Prime Minister should get Mr. Lloyd George's letter at once, and, although he had left for Walmer, got Bonham-Carter to take it to him by car, with the purpose also of bringing the Prime Minister back to town. The car did not get to Walmer until 12.30 a.m.

The Prime Minister returned to London on Sunday,

in time for lunch. Montagu lunched with him. Immediately after lunch Mr. Bonar Law came in. The Prime Minister said : " Well, have you anything to report ? " Bonar Law was looking very grave, and said, " Excuse me, Montagu, but I would like to see the Prime Minister alone." Montagu then went downstairs. Lord Crewe came in afterwards, and, after Bonar Law had gone, the Prime Minister sent for him. Asquith did not say very much in front of Crewe, who was not cognisant of the negotiations proceeding with Lloyd George, as he would have opposed any concession on the part of the Prime Minister. Bonar Law had come to present a resolution of the Conservative members of the Cabinet, which opened up an entirely new and critical development.

On Montagu's suggestion, Asquith sent for Lloyd George. It was found that he was not at the War Office ; he had gone to Walton Heath. " That is the man of quick action," said Asquith. Montagu said : " He must be sent for." A message was sent to Walton Heath, and Lloyd George returned to town that evening. Both he and Bonar Law saw the Prime Minister, separately and together. Montagu, who was waiting in another room, was told by Lloyd George that they were likely to come to an agreement, but he feared that Montagu would not be a member of the new War Council. Lloyd George said that they wanted Henderson. Montagu said that it was an excellent suggestion. So far as he was concerned, he did not mind so long as the question was settled. When Bonar Law and Lloyd George were leaving they met Gulland,<sup>1</sup> and Lloyd George remarked, " You need not get your writs ready, Gulland, there will be no general election," which was another indication that an agreement with regard to the new War Council had been reached. Montagu did not anticipate that it would break down over Balfour.

<sup>1</sup> Chief Liberal Whip.

That evening, when Mr. Asquith dined with him, the Prime Minister mentioned that all Ministers would send in their resignations to him, and that he contemplated putting Runciman at the Admiralty in the reconstructed Government. There were good hopes that the difficulties over personnel would have been overcome.

Montagu begged the Prime Minister to put the understanding in writing and to send it to Lloyd George that night, as he had promised Lloyd George that he would do. Everything was exceedingly hopeful on the Sunday evening, and it was from Montagu's house that the notice was issued to the Press stating that Asquith had decided to recommend the King to reconstruct the Government.

The next morning, at 11 o'clock, Montagu had a message at the Ministry of Munitions that Lloyd George wanted to see him at the War Office at once. Almost simultaneously he had a message from Asquith that he also wanted to see him. Lloyd George complained that he had received no written message from Mr. Asquith confirming the agreement arrived at. He, Lloyd George, had been breakfasting at Lord Derby's with General Robertson and Carson, but he had left word that a message would find him there; no message, however, reached him there or at the War Office. He did not know what this meant or where he stood. He asked Montagu to see Mr. Asquith.

When Montagu arrived at 10 Downing Street he found Asquith in a great state of perturbation over the article in *The Times*. The Prime Minister felt that everything was finished. Montagu told him that he was attaching too much importance to the attack in *The Times*. The purpose of Northcliffe,<sup>1</sup> he explained, was to get him out of office, and if he were to resign, Northcliffe would be in a position to claim that he had accomplished his purpose. He begged Asquith still to write to

<sup>1</sup> Then in control of *The Times*.



Lloyd George, putting on record the agreement arrived at. Asquith did so in Montagu's presence, but he insisted on prefacing it with some remarks about *The Times* articles.

Montagu had a further talk with Lloyd George during the day and there was a good deal of coming and going between all parties. During the morning there was a fair chance of matters being settled, and Lloyd George thanked Montagu for the part he had played in saving the situation and keeping him and Asquith together.

The previous night Asquith had intended resignation, for the purpose of having a free hand in reconstructing his Government, but on Monday, after he had seen McKenna, Harcourt, and Runciman, he seemed to have changed his attitude. They were very much annoyed at not having been consulted when the negotiations were going on with Lloyd George. Montagu tried to get hold of Grey, but had failed. McKenna had succeeded in capturing him. Things looked like breaking up on Monday night.

The party known as "The Shadow Cabinet," consisting of Hankey, Bonham-Carter, Masterton-Smith, and Eric Drummond, dined at Montagu's house. Henderson's secretary, Young, was also present. It then occurred to Montagu that it would be a good idea if the King held a conference at Buckingham Palace. He sent Hankey to see Lord Stamfordham. . . . Chiefly through Montagu's persistency, the conference was subsequently held, in the hope of keeping the Government together in a reconstructed form. . . .

Lloyd George had told Montagu that he did not want to form his own government; he wanted to work with Asquith. When, however, Bonar Law failed and Lloyd George was invited to form a government, he discussed the subject with Montagu. He would not have McKenna on any conditions. He invited Montagu to join him as

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Montagu said he would rather remain where he was, but Lloyd George said, "Supposing you were not able to do so." Montagu replied that he would place himself at Lloyd George's disposal. Montagu asked, "What about Grey?" Lloyd George said, "Well, would Grey take the Colonies?" Montagu said that that meant, of course, he would get rid of Grey altogether, because, if he were not allowed to remain at the Foreign Office, he would not be in the Government.

Asquith was against Montagu joining a Lloyd George Government. There was a meeting of the Liberal members of the Cabinet on Monday evening, when Asquith read Lloyd George's letter of resignation. Buckmaster asked what their attitude should be if they were invited to join a Bonar Law and Lloyd George Government. McKenna said he would have no difficulty in deciding, as he was not likely to receive an invitation. There were a few laughing remarks, but no formal decision was arrived at. When at a later stage Lloyd George was forming his Government and Asquith was invited to join, a meeting was held and both Montagu and Henderson were in favour of Liberal Ministers joining Lloyd George, but again no decision was reached and no pledge taken. Later on Mr. Bonar Law sent for Montagu and offered him the position of Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Montagu felt that he could not accept this position. When Lloyd George was actually forming his government, Montagu received no offer of a position beyond the preliminary sounding which had taken place before Lloyd George realized that he could form a government.

Lloyd George asked Montagu to take up the question of Reconstruction and was ready to appoint him Director of Reconstruction. Montagu drew up a scheme at the new Prime Minister's suggestion. Lloyd George came

to breakfast with him and discussed it. He approved of it and was sent to the War Cabinet. Montagu was invited to attend a War Cabinet meeting. He was kept waiting an hour and a half and was then told that his business would not be reached that day. He was invited to another meeting, waited for two hours, and still his business was not reached. He went to a third, and, without waiting long, ascertained that the business was not likely to be reached, and left. Afterwards he was informed that his scheme had been discussed and not accepted. Another scheme had been put forward for the creation of a committee, with the Prime Minister as chairman and Montagu as vice-chairman.

Several years after the crisis, when time had given perspective to events, and there had been an interval for reflection, Donald set down briefly his own opinions of Asquith's responsibility for what occurred. His comments will be found in the succeeding chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### AFTERTHOUGHTS ON ASQUITH

**I**N the autumn of 1932 the controversy concerning the political events of December, 1916, enjoyed one of its many revivals. The bellows which excited the embers on this occasion were furnished by *The Life of Lord Oxford*, a biography written by Mr. Cyril Asquith and Mr. J. A. Spender, and the distinctive feature of this outbreak was provided by Mr. A. G. Gardiner, sometime editor of the *Daily News*, who, in reviewing the book in the *Spectator*, focussed attention on Bonar Law's part in the events of the fateful Sunday, December 3rd.

On that day, it will be recalled, the Conservatives who held office in the Coalition Ministry took counsel together and passed a resolution in the following terms :

“ We share the view expressed to the Prime Minister by Mr. Bonar Law some time ago that the Government cannot continue as it is.

“ It is evident that a change must be made, and in our opinion the publicity given to the intentions of Mr. Lloyd George makes reconstruction from within no longer possible.

“ We therefore urge the Prime Minister to tender the resignation of the Government.

“ If he feels unable to take that step we authorize Mr. Bonar Law to tender our resignations.”

When, later in the day, Bonar Law called upon Asquith, he took with him a copy of that resolution. According to Mr. Gardiner, the “ intrigue ” by which Asquith was over-

thrown "could not have triumphed but for the fact that Asquith was never shown the terms of the resolution passed by his Conservative colleagues on the Sunday morning. Further," said Mr. Gardiner, "Bonar Law's failure to convey them to him—he had already shown them to Lord Beaverbrook—was one of the darkest blots on the page of history. Asquith was led to believe that his Conservative colleagues had come down on the side of Lloyd George, when the precise contrary was the fact."

This criticism was construed by Bonar Law's son, Mr. Richard Law, M.P., as a serious reflection upon his father's integrity, and he defended Bonar Law's memory in a vigorous rejoinder.

Donald followed this conflict with great interest, and set down his own views upon the dispute in the following terms :

As an observer of events at the time, I am able to throw some indirect light on the issue. The questions are :

Did Bonar Law show, read, or explain to Asquith the resolution passed by his Conservative colleagues which has provoked the discussion ?

The resolution was somewhat equivocal : it could have been construed as directed against Mr. Lloyd George and in favour of Asquith while at the same time it invited Asquith to resign and reconstruct his Government. Had Bonar Law actually delivered the resolution, would the effect have been as is contended, that Asquith would have remained Prime Minister and there would have been no disruptive crisis in December, 1916 ?

Asquith's statement to me on the 7th December, recounting the history of the critical days, which I recorded at the time, was that the Prime Minister preferred to think that the resolution had not been delivered. My impression was that he knew its purport.

Before and after this incident Bonar Law explained to me with the greatest frankness his attitude towards

Asquith. He was loyal to his chief ; he declined to enter into any intrigue against him—such action was repugnant to his nature. He considered that Asquith's presence at the head of the Government was indispensable to national unity, but Bonar Law was equally fixed in his conviction that there must be a change in the direction of the war and that Asquith should give up the Chairmanship of the War Committee. Some of the Conservative Ministers, while they approved of Mr. Lloyd George as the chief director of the war, did not fancy him as the head of the Government : as his future course was more difficult to forecast than was Asquith's.

The direction of the war had become so ineffective that quick decisions with Asquith as chairman seemed to be impossible ; while the clash of personalities, jealousy and intrigue complicated the situation. There was no other course than the reconstruction of the Government. And the only alternative to the retirement of Asquith was, in the opinion of military leaders, as well as of some of his colleagues, that he should give up the chairmanship of the oligarchy who were to direct the war. This he declined to do. The logical development of events—opposition inside, and criticism outside the Government, which cannot be tolerated in a war crisis—would have forced Asquith's retirement. Events proved afterwards that Asquith misjudged the situation and underestimated the personal forces involved : he was convinced that Mr. Lloyd George could not form a Government, because, he said, no Liberals or Labour members would join him, and also because Balfour, whom he looked upon as a tower of strength, would not desert him.

When further records of the December crisis are published I think the conviction will be confirmed that the fate of Asquith did not turn on the Conservative resolution, but on the events which were crowding to a climax in one of the darkest periods of the war.

On Asquith's record as Prime Minister opinions have been pronounced by former colleagues and opponents. Robert Donald's view, however, is of special interest by reason of his friendly but distant relationship. As the editor of the principal Liberal daily newspaper, Donald followed the whole of Asquith's activities as Prime Minister with the closest attention. He was a staunch supporter of Asquith, defending him from criticism within the party as well as from the assaults of his avowed opponents. Yet Donald viewed him with a detachment which was denied to Asquith's colleagues, for Asquith, as Donald has disclosed, never once during his term of office admitted the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* to his confidence. There was thus no intimacy to give bias to Donald's judgment, and that denial of friendship by Asquith would correct any excess of admiration which a Liberal editor might naturally show towards a Liberal Prime Minister. Further, Donald heard opinions of Asquith from many of Asquith's colleagues, and the party truce which operated during the war enabled him to hear also the judgments of men who had spent the greater part of their political lives opposing Asquith.

In 1923, about the time that Asquith, now controlling the balance of power between the Conservatives and the Labour Party, had put Labour into office for the first time, Donald was asked to write an article on "Mr. Asquith's Place in History." In the course of the article he said :

Mr. Asquith has passed his grand climacteric. He will not be Prime Minister again, head of a Liberal Government. The Liberal Party will not be able to place him in that position. But Mr. Asquith is capable of influencing the trend of current politics and of helping to mould political thought. He can shorten or prolong the life of the present Government. He was chiefly responsible for its existence, and its life depends on his strategy.

Yet Mr. Asquith's place in the political history of his country has been fixed by events of the past and nothing in his future career, however notable it may be, can

change seriously the perspective of his record. He will be known as the first Parliamentarian of his time, a finished debater, a sagacious leader. He will be remembered as a man who had shining personal qualities, as one who was loyal to friends and magnanimous to opponents, who never deviated from the strict canons of honour to score a point in debate. His record of statesmanship will place him high up among Prime Ministers. But he failed to put the coping-stone on his career. He will not be classed in history with Peel, Gladstone, or Disraeli, or with Campbell-Bannerman.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer under Campbell-Bannerman he was a success. He introduced the greatest measure of social reform of modern times, Old Age Pensions, for which he never received full credit, and he made more equitable the burden of income tax by differentiating between earned and unearned incomes.

His career as Prime Minister was successful without being brilliant. He lived on the policy which he had inherited from Campbell-Bannerman until Mr. Lloyd George carried him along with the Radical current. Mr. Asquith did not originate or initiate. In the latter years of his pre-war Premiership Mr. Lloyd George supplied the driving force and Mr. Asquith the restraining influence. It was a fruitful political combination. If there had been no war Mr. Asquith would have gone on the even tenor of his way as a Prime Minister who, if he did not originate, was always the loyal supporter of his colleagues who did.

Mr. Asquith rose to his highest heights of patriotic statesmanship when war was declared. He did not hesitate. He did not flinch, but went straight forward with the entire nation behind him.

In his lofty appeals to the nation he came nearer inspiration than he ever did before or has done since, and it is doubtful whether any other statesman would



have succeeded in uniting the people in that crisis in their history when the fate of Europe depended on national union in Britain. Had the war ended in the first year Mr. Asquith would have been acclaimed as the saviour of civilization.

History will judge him by the years which followed. His moral authority began to decline in 1915. He developed weaknesses as a war leader. He hesitated when he should have acted. He studied the feelings of others when he should have imposed his decisions.

Mr. Asquith's prestige received a blow when he formed his first Coalition. He told the House of Commons on 12th May, 1915, that the admission of leaders of the Opposition parties "was not contemplated," and he was not aware that it would "meet with general assent." On the 18th he announced that "after long and careful consideration" he had decided to do what he had not contemplated six days previously.

He added one more failure to English statesmanship in dealing with Ireland in his handling of the first rebellion, with the result that Sinn Féinism was stimulated and the seed sown which led to further tragedies.

But Mr. Asquith's fatality befell him at the end of 1916. There is no occurrence in the political history of the war which provokes more controversy than the crisis of November and December, 1916. No one who took part in that drama will ever be able to get the right perspective of it, and the material does not yet exist upon which final judgment can be formed. Of the failure of Mr. Asquith to rise to the occasion there can be no doubt. He insisted on concentrating on himself too heavy responsibilities. He was crushed under the load. He allowed the War Committee to get altogether out of hand. It was too big. As chairman, Mr. Asquith behaved as a judge who was always trying to get a unanimous decision and postponed the meeting if he did

not get it. The machinery was breaking down. The soldiers were in despair. Mr. Asquith was entreated by Mr. Bonar Law and other friends to change. He waited. His indecision was leading to disruption within. His Government was crumpling. Mr. Asquith failed to make up his mind. The crisis lasted two or three weeks and then dramatic events swept forward with a rush which carried Mr. Asquith to his doom.

Looking back on the incidents of those memorable weeks one can see that Mr. Asquith misread the situation. He misjudged some of his friends and stuck loyally to others who deserted him. He lost confidence ; his courage failed. He was harassed by attacks from without, and was apprehensive of tactics from within. He had not the strength or the ruthlessness to conquer the storm. He was wearied and worried, tired and down-hearted. When he had fallen he was still hoping that he might come back.

It was Mr. Asquith's fall in the most critical period of the Great War which fixed his place in history. Sir Alfred Robbins, the veteran parliamentary correspondent, said the other day that all the Prime Ministers he had known, with the exception of Campbell-Bannerman, had gone out of office disappointed or humiliated men. Mr. Asquith at the time may have felt that he was in both categories.

Although during his term of office Asquith treated Donald with something of the disdain with which he regarded the popular Press, it would appear that in preparing the honours list which it is customary for a retiring Prime Minister to submit to the King, he desired to put forward Donald's name for a knighthood. In his record of a conversation with Mr. Lloyd George on Christmas Day, 1916, Lord Riddell says :

I told him (Mr. Lloyd George) that Asquith had offered Donald a knighthood, which he had refused.

This had been followed by the offer of a baronetcy, which Donald also declined. (Donald told me so this morning and showed me Asquith's letter offering the knighthood.)

"It would not do," was Donald's comment on receiving Asquith's letter, proposing the honour. He went at once to see Asquith, and later sent to him the following reply :

20th December, 1916.

DEAR MR. ASQUITH,

I am deeply sensible of the honour which you are good enough to propose, with the King's approval, for me, and I hope you will not think me ungrateful if I beg you not to proceed with it.

I appreciate the generous motives which have prompted you, and my gratitude to you is just as great and as sincere as if I had been able to see my way to accept the proposal.

I realize also that in proposing to honour me you were honouring the profession I represent, and I shall ever be grateful to you for this recognition.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) ROBERT DONALD.

There were several reasons, the chief of which arose from his unfailing sense of loyalty to the proprietor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Frank Lloyd. Donald was conscious of the fact that any services which had merited this proposed honour were rendered only by virtue of his control of an instrument which Frank Lloyd had entrusted to him. He felt that it would be invidious to accept such a distinction while his proprietor remained unhonoured. It was a worthy motive. But loyalty must be mutual or it is futile. Whether Donald's loyalty in this matter was properly requited by Frank Lloyd should be considered in relation to the events of October, 1918.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEN BEHIND THE SWORD

**I**N days when war was a commonplace instrument of policy or the expression of an autocrat's antipathies, it can have mattered little to monarchs what the mass of people in other countries thought about the causes of a war, or about the manner in which it was conducted. There was no such factor as world opinion with which to reckon. To be sure, subjects might have their opinions on the purposes for which their lives and their wealth were being expended ; and, moved by the necessity of carrying popular opinion with them, their rulers might take action to instruct the public mind : but sustained efforts to influence popular opinion at home or abroad were not regarded as an essential part of statecraft.

Until the present century the necessity for such action in time of war was scarcely appreciated, and not until the Germans found it desirable in 1914 to justify their actions did the word " propaganda " obtain general currency, although a considerable German organization for the manipulation of the Press appears to have been at work for some time prior to the war. Once begun, the German effort to influence the opinion of neutral nations about the war had to be countered, and early in the autumn of 1914 the British Government awakened to the importance of meeting this unfamiliar form of warfare.

According to Robert Donald's notes on the subject, the British Government began under very serious disadvantages.

In pre-war days it had been a British boast that its Press was entirely free of official influences. Press bureaux such as were

attached to almost every Foreign Ministry on the Continent were unknown in Great Britain. Journalists called at the Foreign Office, but whether they received any information depended very much upon the nature of their personal relationships with the officials. According to Donald, the desirability of keeping the Press informed was not recognized. The Foreign Office had no press department for the assistance of British newspapers or for the study of political conditions abroad through the medium of the foreign Press.

In 1912, however, the British Government and the British Press entered into official relationship of a rather distant kind. The Cabinet had decided that in the event of war, instead of controlling the Press by legislation, co-operation should be established between the fighting departments and the newspapers. To that end, there was set up a body representative of the Services and the Press under the title of the Admiralty, War Office, and Press Committee. This step, however, was purely regulative and restrictive ; it had nothing to do with that process of disseminating approved news and views which we now know as propaganda.

With the outbreak of war came the setting up of a censorship of the Press, but even when the hastily improvised arrangements for censorship had begun to work, the Government discovered that the world had presented to it a new task which could only be executed in co-operation with the Press. Ministers became aware of the fact that it was the duty of the Government to justify and to explain Britain's part in the terrible events which menaced the welfare of the whole world.

The enemy was already at work explaining his case with assiduity and skill. In this, Germany was helped very greatly by the fact that some time prior to the war she had set up, and had employed, a well-constructed organization for influencing the Press of the world. It was, said Donald, " a most elaborate network for the supply of news or the means for its distribution, and was worked in conjunction with the German Secret

Service and the German Empire's representatives in different countries." Through this widespread organization the enemy supplied considerable quantities of tendentious news.

To the late C. F. G. Masterman, the British Government delegated the duty of inaugurating a counter-campaign. The immediate necessity was to explain the British case and to defend British foreign policy. To that end Masterman, on September 2nd, 1914, called a meeting of authors, who, in response to his appeal, readily volunteered their services for the writing of articles and pamphlets. There followed, a few days later, a meeting of editors and journalists, at which plans were formulated for reinforcing the supply of news to neutral countries.

In the same month, on Donald's advice, a gifted journalist, the late G. H. Mair, was attached to the Home Office for special duties in counteracting German propaganda activities. For a time Mair worked under a committee consisting of Lord Burnham, Sir Frederick Smith (later Lord Birkenhead), Sir George (later Lord) Riddell, and Sir Edward Cook. But this was one of several committees on propaganda which were more memorable for the brevity of their existence than for anything they achieved.

Still, Mair did useful work, establishing on his own initiative the British wireless news service, a foreign Press summary, facilities whereby foreign journalists obtained news, and a system for the distribution of newspaper articles to the Press of the world.

"After a time," wrote Donald, "the Foreign Office began to take an interest and a hand in the work, without being reconciled to it."

Although Ministers appeared to take little or no interest in it, the propaganda machine grew, and by the time the first Coalition Government went out of office in 1916 both the news and literary departments, from furtive and uncertain beginnings, had developed enormously, and had spread their influence all over the world. But this growth had not been

properly directed ; there was no real head and no co-ordination of effort.

Through official and unofficial agencies abroad complaints reached the Government concerning the deficiencies of the British propaganda service, and the Press, too, was informed by its foreign correspondents of the superiority of the enemy effort to influence opinion in certain neutral countries. Donald heard a great deal from correspondents abroad and from visitors about the shortcomings of the British organization for propaganda.

During 1916, Donald wrote extensively in the foreign Press on British war aims. His best work in this direction seems to have been done in Holland, where one article by him so disturbed the enemy propaganda bureau that a German pamphlet was issued in order to counteract its influence.

Soon after he was installed as Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George invited Robert Donald to Downing Street to discuss the problem, and a few days after that interview Donald received a letter which ran :

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

*January 1st, 1917.*

MY DEAR DONALD,

I wish you would go into the question of our present propaganda arrangements and let me have your views on the subject soon.

Yours sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

The appointment of a " committee of one," if not unprecedented, was at least a refreshing change from the traditional method of conducting official inquiries, and was characteristic of the manner in which the new Prime Minister secured that swift action whose absence had done much to bring the Asquith administration into disrepute.

Donald lost no time in getting to work, and in little more than a week—on January 9th to be precise—he submitted to

the Prime Minister a comprehensive report on the situation and a series of recommendations.

The report showed how, in spite of many weaknesses, the work had grown astonishingly from its small beginnings two years earlier. The Foreign Office was assisting correspondents by furnishing information and by arranging interviews with public men. It was providing facilities for Allied and neutral journalists to visit the Navy, the British front, the munitions factories and other scenes of British war effort. Wireless transmissions of enemy news were being intercepted, and a certain amount of counter-propaganda was being conducted by radio and by cabled statements to neutral countries.

At Wellington House, the headquarters of the National Insurance Commission, C. F. G. Masterman presided over an organization which was issuing an immense amount of propagandist literature. From this centre six illustrated periodicals, printed in many languages, were being published and dispatched. Official documents were being translated. Photographs illustrating the British effort were being distributed to numerous countries and exhibitions of them were being arranged. Cinematograph films had been made under the auspices of the War Office and, with experts to exploit them, had been sent out from Wellington House to Russia, Italy, France, and other countries.

A particularly interesting section of Donald's report was that in which he dealt with Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch on the first Battle of the Somme. Those who have read that impressive dispatch will agree with Donald in describing it as "a memorable and historic document." Yet, at the time of Donald's report, ten days after the publication of the dispatch, it had not been issued in full to any of the Dominions, or to any Allied or neutral country. Nor had it been translated into any foreign language. This neglect was the more regrettable because, as he pointed out, "England is the only country in the war which issues full official accounts of this kind."

Donald made many far-reaching recommendations, the



purpose of which was to unify the various organizations, to abolish overlapping and extravagance, but above all to ensure a fuller, more prompt and more suitable service of news for a larger part of the world than was then being supplied.

In accordance with Donald's recommendations, a Department of Information was set up, and although the Prime Minister "failed to secure the services of a man occupying a strong political position and exercising Ministerial authority" for its supervision, he acted on Donald's advice in appointing Mr. John Buchan to the important post of Director of the Department. Two attempts to set up advisory committees of editors came to nothing, but many of the suggested improvements were carried into effect to the general improvement of British propaganda. The work, however, still fell short of the ideal which Donald had in mind.

Ultimately, Sir Edward Carson was appointed Minister-in-Charge of the Department, and the Prime Minister again called on Donald's services in a letter which read :

*October 19th, 1917.*

MY DEAR DONALD,

After consultation with Sir Edward Carson, who, as you know, is in charge of Propaganda, the War Cabinet have decided to have an inquiry into the way in which it has been carried out, with a view to its improvement. I wish, therefore, you would undertake on behalf of myself and the Cabinet to make a thorough investigation into all the Propaganda work carried on under the direction of the Department of Information. You will have full authority (1) to call for documents and reports and to examine officials so as to obtain full information ; (2) to have prepared a list of the officials employed, their remuneration and conditions of service, also of the voluntary workers, and to compile an analysis of the total expenditure ; and (3) to engage voluntary assistance, so

that the investigation may be carried out as speedily as possible.

Kindly let me know whether you undertake this very important task on behalf of the Government.

Yours sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

Donald submitted a preliminary survey within a few weeks, and a more detailed report at the end of the year. In his investigation he received valuable assistance from Mr. E. A. Perris (then News Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*) and from Sir Arthur Spurgeon who examined the book-publishing side of the Department's work.

The details of this report, highly important though they were at the time, are of no interest to-day, but arising out of his investigation Donald, later, made some notes about Russia which are worth preservation. Writing in June, 1918, he said :

We have failed in Russia both in the character and extent of our publicity work, and this failure has played into the hands of the enemy and of the Russian Pro-Germans, assisting the German conquest, which is due to propaganda and intrigue, and not to force of arms. For six months after the Russian revolution the Department paid for cables sent from a London newspaper which had shown its sympathy with the old regime and was detested by the new rulers. No attempt had been made by propagandist literature or speakers to explain the British Government treatment of labour, and to disabuse the minds of the Russians of the idea that we are engaged on a capitalist war. . . . The literature which has been distributed in Russia was of little service in a country where 80 per cent of the people do not read, compared with the telling effect of personal contact and public speaking. The German conquest of Russia was due

more to the stump orators and to intrigue than to the weapons of war. They worked all through the army, and in the cities and among the Soviets. We should have adopted similar tactics. We sent a few propaganda speakers who went to the army; they were welcomed, and were a great success, but we should have sent hundreds instead of a few. Only one Englishman addressed meetings throughout Russia. . . . Our propagandist action has either been wrong or altogether inadequate. . . . The official committee in Petrograd have been continually emphasizing their official character, and thus neutralizing their influence. They remained isolated from the people. Huge sums of money have been spent to no practical end. It is a distressing story. . . .

The German conquest of Russia by propaganda could not perhaps have been averted by the best-laid and far-seeing plans, but, at any rate, the prejudice created by German propaganda against England could have been counteracted. The mischief cannot now be undone, but we should at least give the Russian people an opportunity of hearing our side and try to remove the prejudices which have been fostered.

Whether those responsible for propaganda in Russia learned much from the errors to which Donald drew attention, it is difficult to say; certainly it cannot be claimed that subsequent efforts were conspicuously successful.

In the arrangements for propaganda generally, radical changes were made in the last year of the war. Sir Edward Carson's control of the work did not last long. In February, 1918, a Ministry of Information was set up and Lord Beaverbrook, who held office in the Government as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was appointed Minister of Information.

Lord Beaverbrook inaugurated a new system, under which the work was controlled by a Board of Directors. On Lord Beaverbrook's invitation, Donald became Director of Propaganda.

ganda in Neutral Countries ; and later certain Allied countries were added to the territory for which he was responsible.

At the same time, Lord Northcliffe became Director of Propaganda in enemy countries, working, in Donald's words, "practically independently of Lord Beaverbrook . . . and dealing directly with the government." Lord Northcliffe was advised by a small committee of his own nomination, which included such interesting personalities as Lord Denbigh, Robert Donald, Sir Roderick Jones, Mr. Wickham Steed, and Mr. H. G. Wells.

The announcement of these new arrangements in the House of Commons by Bonar Law provoked some questions, reported thus :

*Mr. Pemberton Billing* : Has the Right Hon. Gentleman inquired into the record of Mr. Robert Donald before the appointment was made, and is he aware that Mr. Donald held very anti-British views in the *Chronicle* and has done so since the outbreak of war ?<sup>1</sup>

*Mr. Bonar Law* : I do not think I am called upon to answer that, but to the best of my knowledge the statement is absolutely without foundation.

*Mr. Roch* : Will Mr. Donald continue to edit the *Chronicle* ?

*Mr. Bonar Law* : I presume he will continue to edit the *Chronicle*.

*Mr. Billing* : Is it the intention of the Government to nobble every editor in London ?

No answer was returned.

Donald felt that his position required some explanation, and, on the morrow of the announcement in the House of Commons, the following statement was generally published.

The Press Association states, in reference to Mr. Bonar Law's announcement in the House of Commons

<sup>1</sup> The expression "anti-British views" was probably intended to relate to Donald's defence of Lord Haldane.

yesterday regarding Propaganda, Mr. Donald's position is purely an honorary one. During the last twelve months, at the request of the War Cabinet, he made two reports on propaganda arrangements, and has been a member of two advisory committees which met last year.

Interviewed, Mr. Donald said : " I have been asked to become the Director of a section of propaganda work. The details of the position have not yet been definitely arranged. I could not undertake work of this kind if it interfered with my editorial responsibilities or my political independence, or if it did not give me liberty of action within the sphere allotted to me." In reply to a question, Mr. Donald said he had taken an interest in propaganda work since the outbreak of war and had, in an unofficial way, presented the British case in a number of foreign newspapers. " After all," he continued, " this is a newspaper man's job. It consists simply of presenting the British case in neutral and allied countries in a form which is at once interesting and informative. It is publicity work of a kind which was carried on by every Continental government before the war. The need for propaganda was not frankly recognized in this country when the war began, as the whole system is utterly repugnant to our feelings, and contrary to our traditions. Unless our war aims, and now more particularly our peace aims, are described clearly, and misunderstandings removed in foreign countries, our enemies would secure a moral triumph over us as easily as they have a military success against the unarmed Russians. . . . I am quite ready to assist in this national work if I can be of service, but I shall be equally ready to retire in favour of any journalist who is willing to undertake the directorship, and give him my co-operation and help in any capacity."

In spite of this explanation, criticism rumbled in certain sections of the Press. The *Morning Post*, while recognizing



MR. LLOYD GEORGE AT ROBERT DONALD'S HOUSE AT WATTON ON THE HILL  
On the left is Miss Margaret Donald on the extreme right Lady Curzon holding Miss Megan Lloyd George.



that Donald was "admirably qualified" for the post, felt that the functions of a government official (for such he would be despite the absence of pay) were entirely inconsistent with the duty of conducting a "public newspaper" which was supposed to be entirely independent of the Government. The *Saturday Review* in a satirical article on the "Press Gang" observed, "The platoon of papers owned by the noble triumvirate of Northcliffe, Rothermere, and Beaverbrook are in the Press Gang, and they add recruits every day, the latest and most distinguished being, to our astonishment, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*. A correspondent of the *Daily News* said, "It is thus that the Prime Minister holds his Pressmen in leash, even when they run away with him. . . . The culture of propaganda is not confined to countries either enemy or neutral. In the widest sense of charity it begins (and sometimes ends) at home."

But Donald had no more to say: he was endeavouring to find a way of competing with the almost intolerable burden of conducting simultaneously a great daily newspaper and a new branch of government activity.

Of all British propaganda work, Lord Northcliffe's effort in Germany was the most successful. Much of his success, as of all Northcliffe's success, was due to his capacity for choosing the right men for the work. An examination of the personnel of his department shows that Northcliffe's views coincided with those of Donald, who, in one of his memoranda on journalistic and literary propaganda, wrote:

I have always held that this kind of propaganda work can be done best by the experts—the publicists, journalists, and students of foreign politics with a knowledge of the countries, their people and their language. From the establishment of any kind of propaganda department there has been a reluctance on the part of the authorities to utilize the services of journalists in this work. Civil servants, novelists, professors, historians and essayists—



men on the fringe of journalism—were brought in, but few practical newspaper men have been given a chance to organize or to supervise propaganda in countries of which they have intimate knowledge.

The weakness which Donald criticized is still to be found in certain organizations which seek to keep the public informed of their activities through the Press. Journalism is considered to be within anyone's capacity, and the advantages of having a professional journalist for the work of liaison with the Press are not always apparent to those who desire the goodwill and the assistance of the newspapers.

Donald's insistence on the value of the journalist in the organizing of propaganda during the war was one of the causes of the protracted controversy that raged round his reports of his investigation. That discussion went on intermittently for two years, and, at times, his criticisms were strongly resented by the departments concerned. Although, in the end, he had the satisfaction of seeing many of his recommendations carried into effect, it cannot be said that he succeeded in securing to journalists the control of what was their own province.

Some months after the establishment of the Ministry of Information, *Truth* pointed out that five men who might be regarded as "the higher command of British propaganda" were directors of no fewer than forty-five companies. "The average," said *Truth*, "is rather raised by one super-director who adorns twenty-seven boards; but that still leaves eighteen for the other four."

The *Westminster Gazette* had much to say on the same theme: "Shops, railways, rubber, tobacco, high finance in all its branches are spread out before us. How exactly they spread information is not understood."

By this time, however, Donald had severed his connection with the Ministry. Within two months of his appointment, he resigned his position as Director of Propaganda in Neutral

Countries. Although there are among his papers notes which suggest dissatisfaction with certain aspects of policy, he tendered his resignation on the ground that he found the pressure of the work too great. In accepting Donald's resignation, the Minister, Lord Beaverbrook, said, "I do not share your view that you have not been of much service to me ; for I am deeply indebted to you for a great deal of most valuable advice."

Donald retained an advisory place on the Board, and remained for some months longer on Lord Northcliffe's committee, but in July, 1918, he felt unable to continue even this limited association with the Ministry. As will presently appear, events caused him to indulge in strong criticism of the Prime Minister, and possibly he felt that his independence as an editor was not compatible with his retention of seats on committees connected with the Government.

Among the relics of Donald's association with the Ministry of Information, there survives an interesting fragment of an anonymous memorandum evidently prepared for the guidance of those who were composing propagandist statements. Although, judging by the style of writing, it is not Donald's work, it is included here because it seems to merit a little more permanence than is the usual fate of departmental memoranda, if only because its first paragraph dissipates the long-cherished but erroneous belief of some individuals that British war propaganda was nothing but a mass of inventions and falsehoods. The document runs :

Lies are the least effective form of propaganda ; the effect of a lie diminishes and the effect of a frank statement increases with the square of the time that has ensued after it has been told.

Propaganda that looks like Propaganda is third-rate Propaganda.

Never shove your propagandee to a conclusion he can reach unaided.

Unless men are very ill or uncomfortable they resist fears and welcome hopes. The human mind dismisses fear and accepts and even invents hope with all its strength. Propaganda that merely threatens achieves nothing unless it holds out hopes also.

No man will blame himself if there is anyone else to blame. Never blame your propagandee. Blame his government, blame his leaders. Never blame "the German" or "Germany." Indignation with others is the natural state of man.

For the purpose of Propaganda in Germany at any rate, the German is a brave, honest, orderly, clean, able, good-hearted man, gentle-natured and cultured but scandalously misled; he was, in Switzerland, the first republican in Europe; he flourishes in the republics of America; Tacitus witnesses to his virtuous and democratic past; and the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, and Lombards were all Germanic peoples.

During the year 1917, their mutual interest in propaganda served to draw Mr. Lloyd George and Donald together again. As Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George had less time for social contacts, but they met fairly frequently in London and at Walton.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUPPORTING THE SOLDIERS

**O**N April 20th, 1918, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, K.C.M.G., C.B., relinquished the highly responsible appointment of Director of Military Operations at the War Office. He was to be promoted. His instructions were to take three weeks' leave, at the end of which time he would receive further orders to proceed to France to take a command on the Western Front.

General Maurice, the son of a general, had a distinguished military record. Though still in the forties, he had first seen active service twenty-one years previously. He had been through the South African War, through the retreat from Mons and much of the subsequent fighting. He had been Director of Military Operations since 1915, which meant that he had served at the War Office under Lord Kitchener and Mr. Lloyd George. He had been mentioned in dispatches seven times, he had been appointed C.B. and K.C.M.G., and had been specially promoted to the rank of Major-General.

His last phase of duty at the War Office had coincided with the German offensive of 1918 which broke the British line and almost succeeded in separating the British and the French armies. Further enemy attacks were pending when he handed over his duties, and the situation still gave rise to considerable anxiety.

Amid the multifarious duties of this trying period, which period the General spent partly at the War Office and partly in France, he had paid little attention to the newspapers. While awaiting appointment to his new post in France,

General Maurice was directed to pay a visit to the front. At G.H.Q. he encountered a feeling of profound uneasiness created by certain statements made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons. The statements were regarded as being seriously inaccurate and tending to undermine the confidence of the troops in Sir Douglas Haig by putting upon the Commander-in-Chief the responsibility for the recent reverses.

On April 9th, 1918, the Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) had told the House of Commons that notwithstanding the heavy casualties in 1917, the Army in France was considerably stronger on January 1st, 1918, than on January 1st, 1917.

The implication of the statement was that Haig's fighting strength on the eve of the great German attack which began on March 21st, 1918, had not diminished. General Maurice, whose duties had put him in possession of the secret statistics of British military strength in the various theatres of war, knew that implication to be incorrect.

There was another statement made by Mr. Lloyd George in the same speech which the General read with astonishment. It concerned the number of white troops serving in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine. That statement, also, did not tally with the General's intimate knowledge of the facts.

Accordingly, General Maurice wrote to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (as he was entitled to do) pointing out these inaccuracies. He waited nearly a week for a reply, but received none. The matter weighed heavily upon his mind, for it appeared to him that Mr. Lloyd George's statements, and certain answers to parliamentary questions arising out of them, put upon the soldiers responsibilities that ought to have been borne by the Ministers. As he saw the situation, for some time prior to the German offensive, the Government, under Mr. Lloyd George's direction, had been diverting to distant and subsidiary theatres of war troops that were sorely needed to maintain the strength of the British forces on the vital front—the line in France and Flanders. Heedless of Haig's appeals and warnings, necessary reinforcements had

been denied to the Western Front, and, what was equally alarming, Haig had been instructed by the Government to take over part of the French front, attenuating a line already inadequately manned for the ordeal which the soldiers knew to be coming.

Now, after the blow had fallen, and disaster had been averted only by a hair's breadth, it seemed to General Maurice that the Prime Minister was shifting the Government's responsibility to the shoulders of the Commander-in-Chief. That such action would undermine the country's confidence in Haig, was obvious. But there was more in the Prime Minister's tactics than that. Was it not commonly believed at the War Office and in Whitehall that the Prime Minister would have recalled Haig months previously but that he knew such action would be resented by the public? To General Maurice, the Prime Minister's evident evasion of responsibility seemed to be but another step in the process of dislodging a commander whom he dare not openly remove, executed in an hour of crisis when Haig was entitled to expect, and should have received, the fullest support of the King's ministers.

Failing a reply from his late chief at the War Office, General Maurice felt that he must take another course of action, one that would evoke an immediate response. He decided to direct public attention simply and certainly to the mischief by writing to the Press. As a soldier on the active list, his unauthorised communication to the Press would be an offence against military regulations, and the consequences would be serious. That he knew full well. He would be compulsorily retired. His military career would be ended in middle life, and at a moment when his professional advancement was assured. He felt, nevertheless, that his "duty as a citizen must override his duty as a soldier." Consulting only his wife and his mother, and saying no word to any other person, General Maurice sat down and wrote the letter that broke his own career.

On May 7th, 1918, the principal newspapers published a

statement by the former Director of Military Operations accusing the Prime Minister of giving the House of Commons inaccurate information. The letter, inevitably, created a sensation. Fleet Street deployed its scouts in all directions seeking the General, but he was not to be found. He did not wish to give interviews to journalists or to meet politicians who wished to ask questions. So he concealed himself in the country for a week until interest in the subject had abated somewhat.

He had scarcely resettled himself in his Kensington home, when a visitor was announced. The caller was Robert Donald.

If as the result of what occurred subsequently, the assumption was made that General Maurice and Donald acted in collusion over the "Maurice Letter," it was entirely unfounded. As has been stated, the General consulted no other person but the two relatives mentioned.

General Maurice had met Donald casually when Donald, like other editors, had visited the War Office in quest of guidance, or in connection with his visits to the front. The acquaintance of the two men was slight; and now, in calling upon General Maurice, Donald had come, not as a friend, but as a shrewd editor, seeking to do a service to his paper.

Donald invited the General to become military correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, a position which General Maurice, being now a retired officer, was at liberty to take. The invitation appealed to the General. He intended to devote himself to some kind of work. He had literary gifts, and had already some military books to his credit. To interpret the war to the British public, and to help to a better understanding of military events those who had such a vital interest in them, was not unworthy work. So he decided to accept the editor's invitation, and Donald returned to Fleet Street, having enlisted for his paper the services of the late Director of Military Operations on the Imperial General Staff.

Some of its contemporaries admitted that the *Daily Chronicle* had made a coup, and tendered congratulations.

Other editors thought so, but omitted to say so in print. Paper was scarce in 1918, and it was wise to consider Mr. Lloyd George's feelings.

On the day that General Maurice took up his new duties, Donald circulated to the Press Sir Frederick's first article. It was an explanation of his action in challenging the Prime Minister, and was of such great interest that although publication involved an acknowledgment of the *Daily Chronicle*, almost every important newspaper published it, and published it prominently.

But the article was not printed exactly as it was written. The censor had intervened, deleting about thirty words. That interference gave rise to more questions in the House of Commons, to be met by answers that were ingenious but did nothing to allay the uneasiness caused by the General's charges. *Truth* voiced the feeling of many thoughtful people when it observed, apropos of the answers concerning the censoring of the article, "Misleading statements from the Treasury Bench are no new thing, but the scandal has never been exhibited so flagrantly as in this instance. Soldiers have been the worst victims of it, and it is so again here. The more you insist upon the gravity of General Maurice's offence against discipline, the more indefensible you make the resort to unfair methods in order to squelch him."

This is not the place to discuss in detail the pros and cons of the Maurice case. The relevant facts and figures have all been made available by General Maurice, and Mr. Lloyd George has stated that he is content to leave the matter to the "unprejudiced judgment of posterity."

What Mr. Lloyd George thought of Donald's action in offering the platform of the *Daily Chronicle* to the soldier who had dared to accuse him, a platform which he regarded at one time as peculiarly his own, we have yet to learn. Subsequent events, however, afford ground for fairly reasonable assumptions on that point.

After his first article explaining what he had done, and why



he had done it, General Maurice made no further reference to the controversy in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*. He applied himself to the task of commenting upon the military operations, and his articles were widely quoted at home and in the foreign press.

In August, 1918, General Maurice paid a visit to the British front, as a military correspondent. During the weeks preceding his visit there had been a great transformation in the situation. The British Army, now strongly reinforced by the troops for which Haig had appealed in vain nine months earlier, had embarked upon a series of operations which were driving the enemy back to the Hindenburg Line. Although acting in conjunction with the French, who likewise had resumed the offensive, it is undeniable that then, and throughout the last, victorious battles, the British bore the brunt of the fighting.

General Maurice found the army in good fettle. The unseen obstacles that had thwarted them in the past had been swept away. Political and military intrigues which denied that unity of purpose essential to victory, had been cut short by the dire emergency of the spring; and now, at long last, the armies could address their formidable tasks under conditions that made success possible.

But General Maurice heard a strange complaint. Officers told him that although the British forces were achieving victories that evoked the tributes of other nations, no word of congratulation had been offered by their own government.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the *Daily Chronicle* of September 7th, 1918, when the British troops had added still more successes to their battle honours, General Maurice mentioned this grievance at the end of his article. He pointed out that although the Canadian Government had congratulated General Currie and the Canadian Corps on their achievement, and although even

<sup>1</sup> Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, visiting the front as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, a month after General Maurice, noted in his diary: "Everyone here very hostile to Lloyd George for not having given Haig a 'puff.'"

the Trade Union Congress was among the bodies that had sent messages to Haig, "there has been no word from our own Government."

"Why," asked the General, "has our Government expressed no recognition of Sir Douglas Haig's leadership and the valour of our men? We are often accused of concealing the performances of our own troops, and of giving the credit to others. This time there has been no concealment, which makes it more remarkable that so conspicuous a success should have been allowed by the War Cabinet to pass unnoticed."

General Maurice mentioned the matter to Donald and, simultaneously with the appearance of the General's reference to the subject, there was published in the *Daily Chronicle* a short leading article under the title, "Well Done Haig!" which expressed something of the feeling of the nation towards the British troops and their commander.

On September 12th, the Prime Minister made an important speech at Manchester. Evidently hopes had been entertained that Mr. Lloyd George would take this opportunity of making the *amende honorable*, and of using his great gifts of oratory to pay an overdue tribute to the achievements of the British Commander-in-Chief and the men under his leadership. What the Prime Minister did, or failed to do, is best expressed in a passage of the leading article of the *Daily Chronicle* of the following day.

He (Mr. Lloyd George) did right in doing homage to Marshal Foch, but his omission to make any reference to the prominent part played by Sir Douglas Haig in the achievement of the recent victories was very marked. It is a small mind that petulantly refuses to acknowledge the services of a great soldier."

The date of this rebuke (September 13th) is of some importance, for, as will appear later, negotiations for the purchase of the *Daily Chronicle* by certain friends of Mr. Lloyd George entered a decisive phase "about the middle of

September.”<sup>1</sup> But of that matter Donald, at the time, knew nothing; nor would it have made any difference to his championing of Sir Douglas Haig had he known.

The *Daily Chronicle*, however, was not alone in commenting upon the Prime Minister’s extraordinary behaviour. The *Spectator* was not afraid to observe that Mr. Lloyd George “did not think fit to say any word in praise of Sir Douglas Haig, whose name was not even mentioned.”

A week later, on September 21st, the *Daily Chronicle* had occasion to expose to the public the injustice inflicted upon the British Commander (and upon others) by the Cabinet’s decision to withhold indefinitely Haig’s dispatch on the operations on the Western Front between March and June of that year—the period during which the lack of reinforcements had brought the British forces to the edge of disaster.

Two more weeks passed. The British Army, gathering strength from its own success rather than from reinforcements or encouragement from the Government, hurled itself at the enemy’s most formidable defensive system. By the end of September the Hindenburg Line had been smashed, and the way to victory was at last in sight.

“The British successes on the West front since 8th August,” said the *Daily Chronicle*, “are much the greatest in scale ever won by the British Army or a British General . . . Within the period under review General Pershing and General Allenby have received the official congratulations of the British Government, and Mr. Lloyd George has congratulated Marshal Foch. Various private organizations have sent congratulations to Sir Douglas Haig, including the Labour Party and the National Liberal Federation; but the War Cabinet has remained silent.”

That was published on October 3rd. It was the last word the *Daily Chronicle* said upon the subject. It was the last

<sup>1</sup> According to Lord Riddell’s *War Diary*, Mr. Lloyd George discussed the purchase of the *Daily Chronicle* with Lord Riddell some time between September 4th and 6th, but “there seems to be some difficulty in arranging the finance.”

word the *Daily Chronicle* published in criticism of Mr. Lloyd George.

Two days later, on October 5th, the paper passed into the hands of Mr. Lloyd George's friends.

On October 9th Mr. Lloyd George sent a telegram of congratulation to Sir Douglas Haig.<sup>1</sup> The event of the week on the home front, the capture of the *Daily Chronicle*, had evidently caused the "small mind" to expand with generosity.

Lest the facts of this episode suggest collusion between Haig and Donald, it should, perhaps, be stated that Donald's papers afford no evidence of it. All that is known of Haig indicates that, unlike his predecessor, Sir John French, he was never party to any collusion with the Press. Donald was known to Haig, and their acquaintance was sufficiently strong to move the Commander-in-Chief to give to Donald, after the end of hostilities, an autographed map showing the disposition of the allied and enemy forces at the date when the Armistice was signed. But, apparently, there was no correspondence between them.

The more interesting of the personal aspects of this episode is its effect upon the friendship of Mr. Lloyd George and Robert Donald. During the greater part of 1917, their relationship had been close and cordial, and when Mr. and Mrs. Donald were under the shadow of family bereavement, the Prime Minister and his wife visited them at eight o'clock in the morning in order to be the first to express their sympathy. A contemporary diarist printed a story that Mr. Lloyd George took his Christmas dinner at Donald's home, but that was not quite accurate. According to a family diary, Mr. Lloyd George visited the Donalds on December 23rd, 1917, and the Donalds lunched with Lloyd George three days later—on Boxing Day: so that it would be true to say that during the Christmastide of 1917, Mr. Lloyd George gave an

<sup>1</sup> "Foch gave Haig and our men great praise, so I got a telegram of congratulation to Douglas Haig from Lloyd George."—From Sir Henry Wilson's diary, quoted in *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, by General Callwell.

ample manifestation of goodwill towards one whom he was soon to treat so ruthlessly.

Their last friendly meeting would seem to have been at golf on May 4th, 1918, three days before the publication of the Maurice letter. Five months later, Mr. Lloyd George was virtually in control of the *Daily Chronicle* and his guest of the previous Christmas was given the choice between humiliation and resignation.

This episode, however, was not quite unprecedented, though the circumstances were not identical. The biography of an old colleague of Donald, the late Sir Edward Cook,<sup>1</sup> tells a comparable story.

In 1900, when the Boer War was at its height, Cook was editing the *Daily News*, and was endeavouring "to impress the Liberal Party with the justice of the British case." And Cook was succeeding, to the intense annoyance of the pro-Boer section of the Liberal Party, of which section Mr. Lloyd George was an ardent member. Suddenly the principal proprietor of the *Daily News* appeared in the editor's room with the news that he had signed a preliminary contract for the sale of the paper, and that the leader of the purchasing syndicate—which included "R. Lehmann, Cadbury, Leon and others"—was Mr. Lloyd George, M.P.

"Lloyd George," continues this story of his early intrusion into the Press, "asked that the *Daily News* should now take a neutral line on the war. . . . But Cook had not the slightest intention of becoming a stop-gap or compounding with his political conscience." Cook's prompt reply to his proprietor was a request for a cheque in lieu of notice, "for it is not pleasant to work on here with a halter round my neck and my tongue tied."

This episode of 1900 is not without interest in considering the story of purchase of the *Daily Chronicle* which must now be told.

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Edward Cook*, by J. Saxon Mills.

## CHAPTER X

### SOLD

THE sale of the *Daily Chronicle* to Mr. Lloyd George's friends came as a painful surprise to Robert Donald. For more than a year previously the proprietor, Frank Lloyd, had listened to various proposals for the purchase of his property, but his ultimate decision was to leave the whole question in abeyance until the coming of peace. That, at least, was Donald's understanding of the decision, and he had many conversations with Lloyd on the subject.

The conversation containing possibly the first suggestion of sale which Lloyd had entertained, was initiated by Robert Donald in the spring of 1917.

Donald's own notes upon the subject open thus :

On several occasions since he had been Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George has dropped hints to me that he would like his friends to acquire the *Daily Chronicle* as the official organ of his party. The first time was in January, 1917, in the presence of the late Neil Primrose. Later in the spring, Sir Howard Frank thought that Sir William Lever (later Lord Leverhulme) might buy. Sir Howard talked to me several times about the matter. I sounded Mr. Lloyd and found that he was not averse to negotiations.

Frank Lloyd gave Donald an indication of the figure at which he might sell the paper, and Donald, dining with Lord Leverhulme one night, discussed the matter with him. The discussion was not encouraging, and later Donald heard that

Lord Leverhulme would not consider the matter further, because "he knew nothing about newspapers." Nevertheless, Lloyd received a certain accountant in the belief that he was acting on behalf of Lord Leverhulme, and all the confidential figures of the business of United Newspapers Limited were revealed to that emissary. Simultaneously stories gained currency that Lord Leverhulme was acting in conjunction with Lord Beaverbrook and that a combination between the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily Express* was in contemplation. To Donald, such an association was unthinkable. Knowing the mind of Frank Lloyd and his strict loyalty to the Liberal point of view, Donald did not believe that negotiations would be allowed to proceed with such a prospect. He made investigations, and as a result, he had a conversation with Mr. Lloyd which put an end to that project—a project in which Lord Beaverbrook and not Lord Leverhulme was, according to Donald, the dominant party throughout.

Later, Donald was accused by one of the interested parties of "causing difficulties" and of "spoiling the deal," to which he replied that he did not tell Lloyd all that he knew "otherwise he would have been very much more annoyed than he was. He was not well, and I did not wish to upset him."

"Another group then came forward and Mr. Lloyd accepted a scheme which I had prepared," runs a note made by Donald. Of this scheme, no details appear, but there is a record that, in the summer of 1918, Donald succeeded in getting together a syndicate of wealthy and distinguished Liberals with a view to purchasing the paper. Up to a point, negotiations proceeded hopefully, but one financial proposal was made that Frank Lloyd resented, and he terminated the negotiations. Ultimately Donald understood Lloyd to say that he would not sell the property until the war was over and, with that, the editor ceased to interest himself actively in the efforts to acquire the paper.

Towards the end of September, 1918, the Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, Harry Jones, heard a

rumour that the paper had "changed hands." On this Jones noted, "Having recently been assured by Mr. Donald that the Lloyd family had decided not to sell during the war, and that a new company would be formed when the war was over—a company in which the staff would have an interest—I confidently assumed the statement was untrue." Later, Jones reported the rumour to Donald who "dismissed the whole idea" and reassured Jones by saying there was nothing in the story.

On October 3rd, however, the News Editor, Mr. E. A. Perris, met Sir George Riddell<sup>1</sup> who told him that he understood that the paper had been sold. When the news was conveyed to Donald, he laughed, but when he was persuaded to take the story a little more seriously, he remarked: "Mr. Frank (Lloyd) can't do a thing like that. He promised that if he ever did think of parting with the paper he would give me the first option, and time to get my friends together. He is a good man: nothing would persuade him to do a thing like that."

"Not even two million pounds?"<sup>2</sup> he was asked.

"Not unless he first kept his word to me."

Donald's own note on another attempt to "break the news" to him is as follows:

I had no hesitation in denying the statement which Mr. Perris made, although he was quite emphatic that Sir George Riddell was not mistaken. After the failure of the previous negotiations Mr. Lloyd informed me that he had decided not to dispose of the papers for at least two or three years. He also informed Mr. Turner<sup>3</sup> of this decision. The annual meeting of the Company had been

<sup>1</sup> Lord Riddell's *War Diary* shows that he was aware of the negotiations a month before their completion.

<sup>2</sup> This was the first rumour of the purchase price. The actual figure was £1,600,000. Shortly before Donald became editor £400,000 was considered a "prohibitive" price. (*Sir Edward Cook*, by J. Saxon Mills.)

<sup>3</sup> Presumably the General Manager of the company, the late Neil Turner.



held only two or three weeks previously. As usual, I seconded the adoption of the report, and spoke with confidence about the future of the papers, about the opposition which we would have to meet, and generally about our plans and prospects during the period of reconstruction.

Not a hint fell from Mr. Lloyd that he had other plans in view, or that, in fact, the papers at that moment were practically sold.

On the following day, October 4th, Donald called upon Frank Lloyd to seek the truth on the subject. What transpired is best described in his own words :

*Thursday, 4th Oct.*

I saw Mr. Lloyd just a little before lunch. I discussed some other matters, and said casually that there were rumours on foot again with regard to the purchase of the *Chronicle*. He asked what I had heard. I informed him of what Sir George Riddell had told Perris. I was about to ask him to allow me to issue a contradiction to settle the rumours, when, to my astonishment, he told me that the statement was true, and that Sir George Riddell must have been informed by the Prime Minister.

He gave me some few particulars. He mentioned that Sir Henry Dalziel had carried out the negotiations and was to be associated with the new Company. I immediately informed him that I could not continue. He asked me to reconsider this decision. . . .

Mr. Lloyd, in order to justify his statement to me and to Turner that he did not intend to sell, explained how the new negotiations arose. He said that towards the end of July he received a communication from Dalziel and lunched with him. He informed Dalziel that he was not prepared to negotiate, but a few days later Dalziel apparently sent him a definite proposal. At any rate, Mr. Lloyd read to me the first sentence of his reply to

this communication from Dalziel. The reply was dated July 29th, and began: "As I informed you when I lunched with you on Tuesday, we had decided not to sell the papers for at least two or three years, but——"

Mr. Lloyd read no further. I can only surmise that Dalziel made a definite offer, and asked for an option, which Mr. Lloyd apparently proceeded to grant.

There was nothing in my conversation with Mr. Lloyd to suggest that the purchase was complete, only that negotiations were proceeding and that he had committed himself definitely to the sale.

Mr. Lloyd expressed great regret that he had been unable to inform me. He said that this had worried him a great deal; that he had begun two letters to me but was unable to send them. It worried him all the more because the paper was adopting a critical attitude towards Mr. Lloyd George on some matters. He said he had seen Mr. Lloyd George, together with Captain Guest, some time in September, but did not give me the date.

I think he must have seen the Prime Minister after September 13th, the date upon which the "Small Mind" article appeared. He said that Mr. Lloyd George complained of the criticisms which had appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, and said, "We cannot trust Donald." I said that we had always supported the Government on the main issues of the war, and that he himself had made no complaint about the attitude of the paper.

I said that I always took a great deal of trouble to get at the facts and did not take information from one section of the Cabinet alone. He said that Mr. Lloyd George did not resent ordinary criticism, but complained very bitterly of the articles which had appeared about Haig, more particularly with one in which the Prime Minister was said to have a small mind. Mr. Lloyd said that that was more than he could stand. I told Mr.

Lloyd that I did not recall the article for the moment, but I felt sure there was nothing personally objectionable in it.

I did not return to the office until about three o'clock, when I received a note from Mr. Lloyd requesting me to make no mention of the fact that negotiations for the sale of the property were taking place, and he also added that he relied upon me to make no change in the policy of the paper in the meantime. . . .

*Friday, 5th October.*

As I was anxious to know more about the transaction I called upon Mr. Lloyd about a quarter to one . . . and asked him when it was contemplated that the transfer should take place, thinking that it might be at the end of the year. Mr. Lloyd said "To-day," adding that the solicitor had just gone out and that he had been working all night on the agreement. "There has been a terrible rush to finish it," he said. "I am going to sign the contract at three o'clock this afternoon, when one-third of the purchase money will be paid."

I then asked how soon would the purchasers take possession. He replied, "To-night at six o'clock." Sir Henry Dalziel, apparently somewhat to Mr. Lloyd's surprise, had been appointed political director, and he said the new people insisted on taking charge at once. He asked if I would see Dalziel when he came. I said, "Certainly," but that I could not go on in any circumstances. I was prepared, however, to facilitate the transfer and remain in charge for a week and to undertake that during the period nothing would appear in the paper to which the Prime Minister or his friends could take the slightest exception. . . .

Mr. Lloyd did not give me very much information. . . . I endeavoured to get a list of the shareholders from him. He said that they were a financial group ; that he

really did not know anyone definitely beyond Mr. Andrew Weir. The group was represented by Sir John Fergusson, manager of the National Bank of Scotland, who apparently had carried through the transaction. . . .

Mr. Lloyd mentioned that he had received a visit from Mr. James White a little before Dalziel opened up negotiations, and he wanted to buy the paper. He did not know who Mr. White was.<sup>1</sup> . . . He could not understand my disinclination to work with Sir Henry Dalziel. I said if he was going to be managing director and political director, which, owing to his (Lloyd's) courtesy I had formerly been, it was quite obvious that I would have no freedom. . . . I arranged with Mr. Lloyd to inform the staff that afternoon, and to see Sir Henry Dalziel.

*Saturday, October 6th.*

On Saturday I wrote to Dalziel saying that I had resigned, but offering to continue during the week and to make the transfer easy. I also wrote to Mr. Lloyd resigning my position as editor and managing director. In my letter I referred to my many and pleasant associations with him, and said it was a great wrench to me to have to leave.

I received two letters from Mr. Lloyd in reply, both written from Coombe House, Croydon. The first letter, which may be regarded as an official answer to mine, is as follows :

*October 5th, 1918.*

DEAR MR. DONALD,

I am in receipt of your letter of even date, tendering your resignation as editor of our papers and as

<sup>1</sup> This was the notorious Lancashire company promoter who committed suicide in 1927. According to Mr. Alan Bott, in *The Post Victorians*, White was mentioned for a knighthood in 1918, "for munificence to Allied Forces." He asked instead for permission to float a company, the Treasury having forbidden new issues. White received that permission.

managing director of the Company, which we accept with the greatest regret. Your co-directors and every member of the Lloyd family will ever remember with gratitude the great services you have rendered to the Company, and will doubtless give expression to their feelings in that respect when the proper opportunity comes for them to do so.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) FRANK LLOYD.

The other letter, which may be regarded as an unofficial communication, was :

*October 5th, 1918.*

DEAR MR. DONALD,

I am in receipt of your letter of this morning, and want you to accept my most grateful thanks for the steps you have taken with regard to Sir Henry Dalziel and for communicating the change to the staff, as you did.

I greatly regret that you have found it necessary to resign, and enclose formal acceptance on behalf of the firm.

I am deeply moved by your kind reference to myself, and I cannot tell you how pained I am at the severance of our long and happy association. Throughout the twenty years there has never arisen a shadow of a shade between us, and I shall carry with me to the grave the memory of your loyal support and friendship. I know only too well that you have never spared yourself in the interest of the papers. The only complaint that I have ever had to make against you is that you have not done so.

I told you on Thursday how painful it had been for me to withhold from your knowledge that negotiations were in progress, but both parties had pledged themselves to absolute secrecy until the thing could safely be made known. I never anticipated that the actual change

would have to be made so precipitately and thought we should have had time to give proper notice to all concerned.

It is a great wrench for me to sever myself from the associations of a lifetime, but the state of my health rendered such a step necessary unless I want to shorten the days left to me.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

(Signed) FRANK LLOYD.

P.S. I am not feeling very well after all I have recently gone through, and did not feel equal to coming up to-day.

The letter which he wrote on behalf of the directors accepting my resignation was, of course, only on his own behalf. The directors at that time were Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Clark and myself. There was also Mr. Neville Lloyd, but he, I believe, was away in France, and as a matter of fact had not attended a meeting during the war.

On October 5th at five o'clock, an hour before the new proprietors were to assume control, a meeting of the staff of the *Daily Chronicle* was held in the editor's room. "The news had got about, and everybody was in a state of high tension," noted Harry Jones. "Seldom had there been in any newspaper office so happy a family, and one felt an acute sense of grief at the break-up of our old relations. Mr. Donald could not speak, and Perris made a brief statement of the facts. He was labouring under suppressed emotion and his voice was almost inaudible. Mr. Donald followed with a few words."

The meeting was short and soon dispersed. Saturday's paper had to be produced.

On Monday evening (October 7th) Donald went to the office to say farewell to the staff. He opened a brief address

by remarking that it was a great surprise to Mr. Lloyd that the transaction had to be completed so precipitately, but the new proprietor had insisted at midday on Friday that they must take control that day at six o'clock. He did not wish to go into any details, but he wanted to make it clear that his resignation was inevitable. During the whole period of his editorship he had enjoyed absolute freedom in every respect. It would be quite impossible for him to adapt himself to the new conditions. Mr. Lloyd was an ideal proprietor. The only complaint he had to make against Mr. Lloyd was that he held himself somewhat too aloof, so that they lost the benefit of his wise counsel and guidance. Mr. Lloyd regretted exceedingly that he had been unable to inform him (Donald) of the negotiations. Both parties had pledged themselves to absolute secrecy, and Mr. Lloyd as a man of honour had kept his word. Donald closed his speech with a fitting tribute to the staff and an expression of his confidence that they would serve their new chiefs as loyally as they had served him.

A few days later Donald took leave of the staff of *Lloyd's Sunday News*. In his remarks to his colleagues he said plainly, "I have no complaint to make, no recrimination, no grievance. . . . If I am satisfied with Mr. Lloyd's treatment of me I hope that my friends (if they are really my friends) will refrain from criticizing his action. He (Mr. Lloyd) went into this transaction under certain conditions which, as a man of honour, he observed. If Mr. Lloyd had broken his pledged word and had told me negotiations were proceeding I should have thought less of him."

"When the moment of severance came," says the *Newspaper World* report of that gathering, "Mr. Donald, it was plain, found the speaking of his last words a little hard. . . . To some in that muster Mr. Donald had been especially good, so that, although Fleet Street in its time had known many partings, none can have been more full of personal regard."

For the greater part, the staff, receiving assurances from the



MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD

A snapshot taken in the garden of Robert Donald's home at Wilton in August 1914



MR. C. I. G. MASILRMAN (right) WITH ROBERT DONALD  
AT WILTON





new proprietors that the policy of the papers would not be changed, remained in the service of the company. In several instances the decision to continue under the new regime was made possible by the fact that the proprietors did not go outside "the family" to find a new editor. They appointed to Donald's place the news editor, Mr. E. A. Perris, who, for sixteen years, had been in the closest association with Donald. Inevitably, General Maurice resigned, and was promptly invited by Mr. A. G. Gardiner to join the *Daily News* as its Military Correspondent. Harry Jones, the Parliamentary Correspondent, after a short period of indecision, agreed to remain, but it was not long before he transferred his pen to the service of the *Daily News*. Others, too, fell away after a short interval.

The journalist in charge of the feminine pages, Mrs. Mildred Canivet, resigned promptly, and was soon associated with Donald in his new enterprises. So also did Mr. Valentine Heywood, a very able young journalist, now the Assistant Editor of the *Sunday Times*. But the indignation with which the staff first heard the news of the sale soon passed, and Donald's attitude towards the event no doubt played its part in ensuring that the change was made with a minimum of friction and disturbance.

Nevertheless, he would have been more than human had he felt no resentment against those who had planned this coup. Unwisely, he allowed certain politicians to raise the subject in the House of Commons. On October 15th, 1918, the transaction came up for discussion on the motion for the adjournment of the House. That Donald lent himself to this move is undeniable, for certain observations made in the course of the debate are almost textual quotations from his own memoranda: and there are statements about Lord Beaverbrook's association with the first attempt to buy the *Daily Chronicle* which could have come only from Donald.

The subject was not a suitable one for parliamentary discussion. The debate upon it was doomed in advance to

futility, while it afforded certain Lloyd Georgian members an opportunity of proving their devotion to their master by making rancorous remarks about Donald.

Very ingeniously Mr. Pringle, who raised the question, sought to show that the transaction merited the attention of the House. He argued that the purchasing of newspapers in this wise, to obtain political support for the Prime Minister, involved the suppression of independent journalism. Money for new newspapers could not be raised in the normal way because the Treasury had placed a ban upon new issues of capital. There was no longer a free market in paper, and thus a new newspaper could come into existence only by the licence of the Government. He inquired if the Government would assent to an application for supplies of paper to enable a newspaper to be published to advocate the views which were formerly the policy of the *Daily Chronicle*. To that inquiry, of course, he received no reply.

No representative of the Government intervened in the debate, but Sir Henry Dalziel seized the opportunity of explaining the occurrence from his own point of view. "This is a business transaction," he said, "and why should I not be allowed to carry through a business transaction without bothering the House of Commons about it?" The late editor had succeeded to a large extent in getting the money for a purchase. "He made one condition, I understand, which did not operate for success, and that was he was to have complete and absolute control,—a most desirable thing, but I succeeded in getting it, and he did not. . . . But the late editor has not suffered very much. He has taken £70,000 of my money for an interest which probably cost him a nominal amount. So therefore he has not done so badly."

Sir Henry was followed by the late Spencer Leigh Hughes, a journalist who once contributed to the *Daily News* parliamentary comment which was considered by some readers to have the merit of humour. Of the quality of his wit, he afforded the House a sample by observing: "Fleet Street

has been said to be a land flowing with ink and money. I have had a great deal more to do with the ink than the money." He was more amusing, however, if unconsciously so, when he said that Robert Donald "has bragged again and again in public that he and his paper had more to do with the resignation of Mr. Asquith than anyone else in the country," for though Donald had his quota of human failings, he was never a braggart. After Mr. Hughes's effort members were more than ready to go to bed, and the House adjourned.

Some of Sir Henry Dalziel's statements in the House of Commons moved Robert Donald to write to the Press. In a letter published on October 17th, he said :

" Sir Henry Dalziel made several statements referring to myself that were not strictly accurate. It had been alleged, he said, that he had treated me unfairly. Sir Henry has not treated me in any way. I have had no dealings with him. He also stated that I 'had taken £70,000 of his money' and had received two years' salary. The late governing proprietor has promised me an amount, which I did not ask for, equivalent to one year's salary. I am to be paid for my shares at the same rate as other shareholders, but Sir Henry Dalziel considerably overstated the amount, as I am a comparatively small holder. I have no complaint whatever to make about my treatment, but I do not judge the transaction in terms of money.

" If Sir Henry Dalziel and his friends have found, as he says, a sound investment, my sixteen years' service as editor has, I hope, helped to create it.

" No editor ever worked with more freedom or enjoyed more independence than it was my good fortune to possess under the late proprietors. It was a special privilege to have worked under such conditions. When, therefore, I was informed that the property had been sold, that the new owners insisted as a condition that

they must take charge of the policy in a few hours' time, and that a new political director in the person of Sir Henry Dalziel—to whose policy judging by his speeches and his newspapers, on certain side-issues of the war, I had been diametrically opposed—had been appointed, I had no alternative consistent with editorial freedom and personal dignity but to resign. Any editor placed in similar circumstances would have done the same, without any question of compensation, which, in my case, I did not raise and was perfectly prepared to forego. Obviously my financial interest lay in accepting the offer which was to be made to me, to remain as editor under the general control of a board, and under the political direction of Sir Henry Dalziel."

Among the newspapers that dared to comment upon the transaction, the sale of the *Daily Chronicle* cannot be said to have had a good press. "It is at least a coincidence," said the *Morning Post*, "that the *Daily Chronicle* should have thus changed hands at a moment when that journal was developing into an outspoken critic of Lloyd-Georgian policies. Just as there are other ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream, so there are other ways of silencing newspaper critics than by conferring on them the Order of the British Empire."

In the same political camp, *The Globe* deprecated the change. "We sincerely regret the transaction," said that paper, "because, under the editorship of Mr. Robert Donald, the *Daily Chronicle* has acquired a remarkable position as a fearless and independent organ, representing the best side of Liberalism."

On the Liberal side, the *Westminster Gazette*, after paying a compliment to Donald's independence and ability, observed: "Happily, we have seen in the past that though newspapers may be bought, the journalist whose opinions count is not to be sold. When that ceases, the influence upon opinion that newspapers wield, and that makes them valuable to those who

have a policy to promote, will quickly die." The radical *Star* suggested that the announcement that the policy of the *Daily Chronicle* would not change under its new proprietorship should be taken with "several grains of salt." The article continued: "One thing we may be certain of . . . there will be no repetition of the leading article which complained that Sir Douglas Haig had never received the congratulations of the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet on his brilliant series of victories. That article appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on Thursday morning. On Friday night the Prime Minister's representative had taken charge of the offices of the newspaper and Mr. Donald had resigned. Fleet Street knows that the Prime Minister does not spare those who cross his path. General Maurice, who ceased to be a Director of Military Operations when he exposed the Prime Minister's speeches, is now the Military Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, and it will be interesting to see how long he holds that post."

Some newspapers, like the *Manchester Guardian*, while refraining from criticism of the transaction, paid a tribute to Donald and his work for the paper. "The position of the *Daily Chronicle*," said its Manchester contemporary, "is a very strong one. It has become, in the opinion of many journalists, the best news organ among the popular papers, and in its views it has shown much independence and courage." The *Birmingham Daily Post* offered similar testimony. "Mr. Robert Donald, a man of tireless energy and vigilant enterprise, has conducted the *Daily Chronicle* with conspicuous success," said the *Daily Post*, "and in matters of party politics before the war and since he often displayed a courageous independence." The *Nottingham Guardian*, another fine provincial newspaper, which, like the *Birmingham Daily Post*, advocated Conservative views, considered the change was not a matter for congratulation. "For some time past the paper (the *Chronicle*) has been conducted in a very able manner, and in several directions it has done substantial service to the State. It has often displayed unusual inde-

pendence in its judgments, and many people have looked to it for impartial and perfectly disinterested opinions."

Such views were typical of some scores of Press comments upon the sale. The observations of several of the weekly reviews were equally critical. The *Nation* declared that the episode had "made men wonder what part of the newspaper world can be made safe from Mr. George's peculiar brand of democracy. Here was a paper which, in Mr. Donald's capable and experienced hands, had given his Government a support that was only not a slavish one. It committed an error or two, no doubt. It dared to stand up for a British soldier and state the palpable truth that the Prime Minister had belittled his services; straightway it falls out of favour. Our Grand Vizier is not satisfied; he must not only be proclaimed right, he must never be deemed wrong."

"The *Daily Chronicle*," said *Truth*, "has been very frank and outspoken, has hit a great many people who deserved it, and has not kow-towed to anybody. Apparently that is why Mr. Donald has had to go."

Even in America the change evoked comment. The *New York Times*, which was not alone among United States newspapers in touching on the subject, described Donald's retirement as "a loss to journalism and to public life. . . . Holding strong and steady beliefs, he was the creature of no man and no party. . . . No British editor in recent times had so wide a range of respect from leaders in the various fields of thought and action."

During the days following his resignation, Donald received about 150 letters, telegrams and cables, expressing the regard of the senders, and, in many instances, recording also their indignation at what appeared to be the motive of the transaction. The writers included statesmen, politicians, ministers of religion, novelists, journalists, lawyers, civil servants, business men, leaders of public movements, and old readers of the *Daily Chronicle* personally unknown to Donald. Among these last named was the then Bishop of Chelmsford. They

came from all over the country, from men serving with the forces in France and from the United States. Even a Judge of the High Court, Mr. Justice Shearman, penned a few discreet lines.

A catalogue of the names alone of these correspondents would constitute an impressive testimonial to the respect in which Donald was held by distinguished and representative men and women in all spheres of life. The temptation to quote from the letters must be resisted, but exceptions may be made in favour of two statesmen who still hold high office in the service of the country. Sir John Simon wrote :

MY DEAR DONALD,

I am just back from France, and I read with *great* regret that you are leaving the *Daily Chronicle* and that by all accounts it has got into less independent hands. This is felt by all who prize a free Press to be a most serious blow. You have always held your own course without fear or favour, greatly to the public advantage, and we shall miss your outspoken vigour. But I greatly hope that you will soon be back in a position to influence public affairs, as you can and should.

Ever yours sincerely,

JOHN SIMON.

No less gratifying was a note from Mr. Walter Runciman :

MY DEAR DONALD,

The journalistic upheaval of the last fortnight has been much in my mind, and I feel that it is a matter for pride to your friends to have seen the dignified and emphatic manner of your departure from the *Daily Chronicle*. The whole transaction bears the mark of the hands which devised the scheme of political influence from which public opinion has suffered during the last two years, but I am not sure that the use to which money has been put, to extinguish your independence, is to turn



out a journalistic success. They little know how much your enterprise and ceaseless activity *made* the *Chronicle*. Your high standard and high spirit, however, are what in these days I most admire, and in the confident belief that these are still valued in Fleet Street and Parliament I send you my very best wishes, and remain,

Yours very sincerely,

WALTER RUNCIMAN.

Such were the feelings entertained towards Donald by two statesmen. The emotions of those who knew him better, of men who had daily contact with him and knew him as their chief, were not dissimilar. Typical of many messages was a letter from the late J. G. Hamilton, formerly in charge of foreign affairs on the staff of the *Daily Chronicle*, and, at the time of writing, on the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, whose Paris Correspondent he became later. Hamilton wrote :

Men like myself have long memories, and yours has been a really historic editorship. The cause of progress in the country as a whole, and in London in particular, owes you an immeasurable debt. It has been given to few men to build up, as you have done, from the very ground, one of the great organs of the world Press ; to have done so without dishonour, without catering to mob psychology, without the grosser form of appeal or debauching the public mind, is almost a unique achievement.

As for myself, I shall always look back with gratification to the years when I worked under your leadership. If I say that I have never served under an editorship so fair or kindly or helpful, I do so from an experience that includes all the great Liberal papers of this country.

It is not given to every man who achieves distinction thus to carry with him the loyalty and regard of his associates and

subordinates. Some attain eminence only by mounting upon the backs of those who serve them, and the impress of their climbing boots is the only enduring mark which they leave upon their fellows. But Donald was not of that breed. Of him can be truly offered that eloquent but uncommon testimony, "he was liked by his own people."

## CHAPTER XI

### A TRIBUTE TO COURAGE

**A**MONG the men engaged in journalism there exists a certain *camaraderie*, but it has a curiously uneven quality. "Journalists," some cynic has observed, "are brothers—like Cain and Abel." Certainly their relationship produces strange evidences of affection, as when, for example, at the dinner of a Fleet Street confraternity glowing with the spirit of professional fellowship, one editor administered to himself a large dose of snuff, and marred the speech of another editor by a fit of sneezing, exactly equal in duration to the length of his colleague's contribution to the discussion. Jealousy is not unknown in journalism. As a rule, the more successful the journalist, the more difficult it is to discover among men of comparable standing an opinion of him that is wholly free from pettiness. Possibly that is just the scoria produced by the heat and fermentation of Fleet Street; probably one must dip beneath it to ascertain the real feelings of these men one to another.

Twice during his lifetime, however, there was manifested towards Donald by the Fleet Street community a degree of regard which was truly remarkable. The first occasion was a luncheon given in his honour soon after his retirement from the *Daily Chronicle*. Of this function, its chairman, Mr. H. A. Gwynne, the editor of the *Morning Post*, declared: "In all my experience, both as to the numbers and the character of those present, I have never seen it equalled—indeed, it surpasses anything I have ever seen."

Between three and four hundred persons attended, and

Mr. Sydney Brooks who organized the luncheon said that if he read all the letters he had received from those who were prevented from attending, those present would receive a satisfactory answer to the question whether a Scotsman could ever, in any circumstances, be made to blush.

Not far from the editor of the *Morning Post*, and General Sir Frederick Maurice, sat H. M. Hyndman, the veteran Socialist, and the tables linked journalists so opposite in their views as Massingham of the *Nation* and Maxse of the *National Review*; Mr. A. G. Gardiner of the *Daily News* and Arnold White, a Die-hard of Die-hards; Mr. J. A. Spender of the *Westminster Gazette*, and F. W. Wile of the *Daily Mail*. Among other distinguished journalists present were Sir Edward Cook, Sir William Robertson-Nichol, Sir Roderick Jones, Sir Sidney Low, Sir Arthur Spurgeon, Sir Alfred Robbins, Sir Edmund Robbins, Sir Charles Russell, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, Mr. Hamilton Fyfe, Mr. R. A. Bennett, Mr. J. M. Bulloch, Mr. Ernest Parke, and Mr. Hartley Withers.

The Marquis of Lincolnshire with several members of Parliament represented politics. Newspaper proprietors who attended included Lord Burnham, Lord Cowdray, and Mr. H. G. Cadbury.

Mr. H. G. Wells was there, and Mr. Arnold Bennett; Fisher Unwin, the publisher, and Sir Campbell Stuart, then at Northcliffe's right hand. The ladies included Dame Henrietta Barnett, Lady Violet Greville, Miss E. A. Horniman, and Miss Lena Ashwell.

"All this," said Mr. Gwynne in proposing Donald's health, "is to do honour to a most distinguished journalist. . . ."

"Mr. Robert Donald and I," (continued Mr. Gwynne) "have never seen eye to eye together on any great question of politics, but I have never yet met a man in journalism for whom I have had a greater respect. He has been fearless in the presentation of the facts to the public; he has been sincere in the expression of his views, and he has been entirely

independent. These three qualities were the qualities which were always ascribed to ourselves in the past as being the essential qualities of good and sound journalism, and I beg to say that Mr. Robert Donald has given to us who are contemporary with him and to those who will follow after him an example of solid, sound, honest journalism of which we ought to be proud. I don't think that we need commiserate with him at all. An assembly like this to do honour to him must be more than gratification to him for any trouble or any suffering, or any pain he may have had in the past, but this is not an end, we hope and believe, to Mr. Donald's career in journalism. Journalism cannot afford to let him go."

Mr. T. P. O'Connor in supporting the toast said: "I should be sorry to think the day would ever come when it could be said with truth of journalists as a class that they were willing to sacrifice their convictions to emoluments or position. There is no reason except conviction why Mr. Donald should not still be the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*. Not the smallest. I am perfectly sure they would have been only too glad to retain him, but Mr. Donald, being a man of strong, earnest, and honest convictions all through his life, said it was incompatible with his convictions that he should remain the editor of the paper under the new proprietorship, and accordingly he was ready to sacrifice what, after all, is one of the great prizes of this world—the editorship of a great and widely read daily newspaper. I, therefore, join most warmly and willingly, not merely because of the long friendship I have had with him and his family, but I join to do honour to a man who has vindicated the independence and the integrity of the great and powerful profession to which he belongs."

Mr. J. A. Spender added a tribute, saying they had always respected Donald deeply, but never so much as at that moment. He added: "It is a very great service to journalism that a man in Mr. Donald's position should testify, in his own person and at great sacrifice, that, though a news-

paper may be sold, an editor cannot be bought. We are here to do honour to a man who has nobly upheld the best traditions of journalism at a time when they have been in danger of falling into discredit. We all owe him the warmest acknowledgment for that service, and we can only express our hope that in like circumstances we may be able to follow his example."

Donald, replying to the toast, said that he would much rather be at the reporters' table than in the place he occupied. "I can only thank you and say that I am deeply moved," he said. "It is quite impossible for me to thank you adequately, but I wish you to understand that I appreciate this tribute as the highest honour that could be offered at your hands. . . . I do not, perhaps, quite agree with some remarks by my friend Mr. Gwynne. You have heard him say we never did agree. I don't know that I agree with him entirely on the question of combinations in the Press. This is an era of combinations and big businesses, and I do not think that newspapers can be excluded from this modern tendency. . . . We are drifting to company ownership, and there is more than one kind of combine in the Press. I would like to draw a distinction between such a group as the Northcliffe group of papers, and other combinations. After all, you have the principle in the Northcliffe Press that the papers are run by newspaper men. The whole control is in the hands of newspaper men. On the other hand, there is a tendency now for people to buy newspaper shares and then consider that they thus become newspaper men. That is an important distinction."

After showing how the industrialists of Germany, in pre-war days, had acquired control of newspapers to promote the demand for increased armaments, Donald instanced the end to which that control was used during the war. He said: "The German papers were publishing information which was not true. It is as bad to keep out what is true as it is to put in what is not true. During the war the German people had

never been told what they were fighting about. The Press was Prussianized and controlled. The facts were suppressed. It is only recently that the people have begun to be disillusioned. I believe we in this country, on the propaganda side, did something to help them to see the light. . . . In this country we had rather too much Press control and inspiration during the war. Control was quite all right up to a point. It was necessary and inevitable; but we are in danger of beginning the Prussian system. Almost every department has had its own publicity agency, and some Ministers have their own Press agents. That system is the immediate danger. After all, the British Empire rests upon freedom—freedom of its political institutions, freedom in enterprise, freedom of opinion, freedom of the Press, and anything that is to limit that freedom is a national danger.”

After a vote of thanks to the chairman, the company dispersed, believing that it would not be long before Donald was back again in journalism, his prestige enhanced by the test from which he had emerged so triumphantly.

## CHAPTER XII

### PROPRIETOR OF *THE GLOBE*

IN the course of his leave-taking at Salisbury Square, Robert Donald remarked : " I am much too old to enter upon a new editorial career of the kind to which I have devoted the best years of my life." Whether at the age of fifty-five he was right in taking that view is arguable. Taking it, however, his wisest course might have been to retire entirely from active journalism. Instead, he allowed himself to become involved again in journalism to an extent which imposed considerable physical strain and much anxiety.

Soon after his retirement from the *Daily Chronicle* he accepted an invitation to become Managing Director of the Bradford Newspaper Company, a prosperous concern which owned the *Yorkshire Observer*, the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, and a number of weekly newspapers. He accepted also a similar position on the directorate of a Hull newspaper company. His duties, however, were largely advisory and did not entail his leaving London, except for board meetings.

But metropolitan journalism tempted him still. The fragrance of the incense burned at the complimentary luncheon persisted about him. He was conscious of the urgings of those who hoped that he would find a new medium for his gifts. Consequently, when he heard that *The Globe* might be bought, he was interested.

*The Globe* was a newspaper with a great tradition. It was London's oldest evening journal, having a history that reached back to 1803.

Many of those who remember the paper think of it as being



primarily an organ of opinion rather than a commercial undertaking, and as an uncompromising advocate of ultra-Conservative views. In its origin it was neither. It was established by a group of booksellers, goaded to action by the treatment accorded to their advertisements by the *Morning Post*. Far from being dyed-in-the-wool with Toryism, *The Globe* was originally a Whig newspaper, and did not change its political colour until it was purchased for Tory purposes in 1866.

In its time, *The Globe* played a very influential part in politics. At one period Palmerston took a hand in shaping its policy. "It has been denied that he actually wrote articles in it himself," observed a *Globe* editorial in 1903, "but the fact is beyond dispute, as the archives of the office can prove." In 1878 *The Globe* made a mark on history by publishing a summary of a secret treaty between Great Britain and Russia. An official denial of the accuracy of this summary was met by the publication in *The Globe* of the full text of the treaty.

Even in post-war days *The Globe* seemed to exhibit a certain consciousness of its past. Fleet Street respected it, and viewed it with that peculiar veneration which, in England, is accorded to men and things that exhibit abnormal powers of survival. It carried itself with an air of silk-hatted superiority. Less esteem and more sales would have pleased its owners better. But the mass of Londoners seemed to have decided that appreciation of *The Globe* was an acquired taste, and they had no time to acquire it.

The paper had always found "backers." Still more remarkable, it had survived a break in its continuity of publication. In 1915 it offended the censorship regulations by announcing that Lord Kitchener had resigned (actually, he had left for a visit to Gallipoli, during which time the Government hoped to find a way of removing him without alarming the public). For this offence the paper was suppressed under the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and remained out of action for two weeks, after which interval it was permitted to

October 19th. 1917.

My dear Donald,

After consultation with Sir Edward Carson who, as you know, is in charge of Propaganda, the War Cabinet have decided to have an enquiry into the way in which it has been carried out with a view to its improvement. I wish, therefore, you would undertake on behalf of myself and the Cabinet to make a thorough investigation into all the Propaganda work carried on under the direction of the Department of Information. You will have full authority (1) to call for documents and reports and to examine officials so as to obtain full information; (2) to have prepared a list of the officials employed, their remuneration and condition of service, also of the voluntary workers and to compile an analysis of the total expenditure; and (3) to engage voluntary assistance so that the investigation may be carried out as speedily as possible. Kindly let me know whether you undertake this very important task on behalf of the Government.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Donald Esq.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. Donald', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left and a flourish at the end.

A "COMMITTEE OF ONE"

Mr. Lloyd George's letter asking Robert Donald to conduct an official inquiry.



resume publication. Such a breach of continuity would have killed many a newspaper. But not so *The Globe*. It re-emerged, though, no doubt, it lost many readers permanently during its period of compulsory quiescence. The raising of the price of the halfpenny papers to a penny, thus bringing them to the same price-level as *The Globe*, did not improve its fortunes.

The paper required revitalizing, and Donald considered, with some justification, that he could give it the treatment it needed.

The negotiations for the purchase of *The Globe* were not protracted. Donald understood that there was another prospective purchaser in the field and, remembering how rivals had stolen a march on him in connection with the sale of the *Daily Chronicle*, he came quickly to a decision—a little too quickly according to some opinions. A sum of £40,000 was asked, and Donald paid it. Nowadays the price seems small enough for a metropolitan newspaper; but *The Globe* was not comparable to any London evening paper of to-day. Its sales were small, its plant was limited and not particularly modern, while its premises in the Strand were held on a lease that was nearing its end.

Still, Donald had raised the *Daily Chronicle* from beginnings less promising, and he might have repeated the achievement had he been backed by resources as ample as those of the Lloyds. Unfortunately, he seems to have relied upon his own means, and they were not equal to the prolonged strain of nursing the paper to a healthy, economic condition.

Though he did not edit the paper (he appointed Mr. Frank Dilnot to the editorship) he was in close touch with it and directed its affairs with his old skill and energy. He divorced it from its somewhat antiquated plant, and had it printed by contract—an arrangement which enabled him to change the size and the format of the paper to suit prevailing taste. He put at its disposal the sources of news which his long and intimate association with leaders in various walks of

life had opened to him. He induced Sir George Paish to become the financial director of the paper in the hope of giving it new prestige in the City, and many of his influential friends expressed their willingness to contribute articles to *The Globe*.

The knowledge that Donald was directing the paper destroyed some of the cobwebs with which, in the eyes of many Londoners, it was festooned. His name, no doubt, attracted to it readers who admired his editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* and the spirit in which he had relinquished that position. These readers, however, were for the most part Liberals, and the name of *The Globe* was associated with Toryism of the most reactionary kind. Apart from that consideration, a more progressive political policy was essential if new readers were to be won.

Donald was not so rash as to believe that he could transform such a paper into an organ of Liberalism, nor did he desire to do so. He intended to "execute a curve" as he put it, and gradually to bring the policy of the paper round to one of political independence and of moderate views.

An important step in that direction was taken in the first number of *The Globe* produced under his control, on October 13th, 1919. In this issue began a series of articles on "The New Political Outlook," by Lord Robert Cecil (now Viscount Cecil of Chelwood). At that time Lord Robert's political position was a trifle obscure. "I do not know exactly what he would label himself in party politics, if he labelled himself at all," wrote the *Diarist* of *The Globe*, "but his Conservative environment from youth up does not prevent him from being the truest kind of democrat."

To put up a son of a great Conservative Prime Minister to address the readers of *The Globe* on the virtues of the League of Nations was a sound beginning to a policy of bringing a Die-hard organ round to a more progressive policy without repelling old readers.

But Donald, ardent politician that he was, did not over-

rate the value of the political appeal of any newspaper. He knew, too, that no paper which made party service its *raison d'être* could secure a large following in the new era that was now opening. He aimed, first and foremost, at making *The Globe* a good newspaper. That involved a considerable reinforcement of the staff. Few men knew the resources of professional skill as Donald did. He enlisted a number of new men, enlarging both the reporting and the sub-editorial staffs. The sales of the paper responded to these measures, but though progress was substantial, it fell far short of what was required to make the paper self-supporting. Early in 1920 it became evident to Donald that he could not carry the paper financially until the day when it would stand upon its own feet.

Someone who knew that he was contemplating a sale of the property introduced to Donald a prospective purchaser in the person of Laurence Lyon, a Member of Parliament, who had entered the House in 1918 as the Coalition-Unionist representative of Hastings.

In 1929, shortly before his death, and long after he had left Parliament and Great Britain, Lyon revealed his adventurous career in an autobiography entitled *By the Waters of Babylon*. He was a Canadian lawyer who had dabbled in journalism and who had migrated to Europe. During the war he acquired the weekly review (now defunct) called *The Outlook*. "I can hardly say I bought it," he confesses in his autobiography, "since I paid little or nothing for it."

Encouraged, perhaps, by that experience, Lyon opened negotiations for the acquisition of *The Globe*. He expressed a desire for a speedy cash transaction. Donald was agreeable, and arrangements were made for Lyon to assume control of the paper late in February, 1920.

It seems, however, that there were financial difficulties on Lyon's side from the day on which the first payment became due. Still, Donald, always disposed to think the best of a man until the worst was evident, allowed control to pass, but

retained a substantial interest in the property as a debenture holder. Uneasiness about the financial situation was a feature of Lyon's proprietorship of the paper, so much so that the manager, Mr. Albert Laker, was often uncertain whether money to meet salaries and wages would be available on pay days. On these occasions the manager would tell Donald of his anxiety, and although ultimately the necessary sum was always produced by Lyon, there was already lying in the safe, unknown to him, a similar sum, provided by Donald against a possible default.

Such a condition of affairs could not continue for long. Eventually, Lyon seems to have disappeared from view, displaced by a new proprietor. His name was Clarence Hatry.

At this time Hatry enjoyed the reputation of being a man of great wealth, with a considerable future in the City. Some of the staid financial authorities did not regard him with unqualified admiration; but then, the man was young and successful, a condition which the elders of the City always view with a certain degree of suspicion. He was handling ambitious projects, and to outward seeming, handling them effectively. To such a man the control of a paper like *The Globe* offered advantages other than the prestige that comes of owning a metropolitan newspaper. But there may have been a more specific purpose in Hatry's action.

The real explanation of this interesting phase of his career may, or may not, reside in an incident which Lyon recounted in his autobiography. According to this story, Hatry, in the spring of 1920, "conceived the idea that he would like to be a baronet." Lyon mentioned the matter to Sir George Younger (later Lord Younger), then Chairman of the Unionist Party organization. Says Lyon: "I told Younger in answer to his queries that I knew little about the person in question . . . and that my only relations with him were that some time before he had taken over an option on a newspaper property in which I had some interest." Hatry was introduced

to Younger, and, though the impression made by Hatry was not unfavourable, Younger was not prepared to submit for an honour the name of a relatively young man who had not borne arms in the war and who seemed to have no record of public service. Some months later, according to Lyon, Younger was examining a list of nominees for honours put forward by the Liberal wing of the Coalition when he came across the name of Clarence Hatry. The Tory chairman wondered by what process it came there, but he remarked to Lyon, "I can promise you that his name won't stay there." And it did not.

That Hatry's ambition to own a newspaper coincided with his alleged aspiration to a baronetcy, and waned when the honour seemed to be beyond his grasp, is a possibility.

At all events, Hatry did little to exploit his new possession. He, or his nominees, promoted a company to acquire *The Globe*, and Donald, who desired to be relieved of his interest in the paper, was given to understand that considerable developments were contemplated. But no enterprise was shown. Though he continued to meet the loss on its production Hatry allowed the paper to continue on its course in a pedestrian fashion. After a time it returned to its old home in the Strand, and was conducted with extreme economy.

Early in 1921 Donald, who was very uneasy about the position, was given short notice of the proprietor's intention to stop publication on the paper. He made efforts to find a purchaser, but the time available was too restricted. Soon the future presented a choice between allowing the paper to die or of Donald resuming responsibility for the loss. It was very much to the detriment of Donald's interest to allow the paper to cease publication, but he could not resume an indefinite financial responsibility.

Seemingly, the end of the paper could come about in two ways—either by Hatry ordering a cessation of publication, or by Donald, as the debenture holder, selling the copyright in



the title. It is interesting to note that Hatry was most anxious to escape the stigma of having signed the death warrant of this old London institution. He preferred that Donald should sell the title, but Donald felt that the only offer that had been made for the copyright (from the *Pall Mall Gazette*) was not sufficient. The prospective purchaser would not increase his bid, and in the end Hatry handed over to the purchaser a sum sufficient to make up the difference between what had been offered and the figure which Donald would accept.

So on Saturday, February 5th, 1921, *The Globe* made its last appearance after an existence of nearly 120 years. It was amalgamated with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and two years later the *Pall Mall* was merged in the *Evening Standard*. About the same time as the *Pall Mall Gazette* came to an end the *Westminster Gazette* became a morning paper, but did not have a long life in its new incarnation. Thus, in the space of a few years, London lost three evening newspapers.

The final scenes in the office of *The Globe* were a mixture of pathos and drama. For some old servants the end of the paper was virtually the end of everything. Others were restive concerning the pay due to them in lieu of notice, and there was wild talk of a demonstration outside Hatry's principal establishment in the City, the Commercial Bank.

It must be stated to his credit that Hatry met the situation fairly. He made terms with everyone to whom notice was due, and he kept his bargains. Mr. Laker, who saw the settlement completed, declares that in this matter he has no censure to pass on the man whose career ended, some ten years later, in the most sensational and the most far-reaching collapse the City of London has ever known.

Donald's ownership of *The Globe* was his last association with a London daily newspaper. In later years he became interested in two Sunday newspapers, firstly *The People*, and secondly *The Referee*. But though he was nominally the controller of both these papers for a period, his association with each was transitory. He seems to have been little more

than an intermediary by which the properties passed from one ownership to another.

In retrospect, his purchase of *The Globe* appears to have been a great mistake. Directing the paper on behalf of a wealthy proprietor he might have made it a most valuable property. But he chose to become a proprietor, and, closely as he had been associated with Frank Lloyd in the proprietorship of the *Daily Chronicle*, his gifts were not the gifts of a successful proprietor. Nor were his resources.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IMPERIAL SERVICE

IT was a characteristic of Robert Donald that he was never frightened by the magnitude of a project. In the jargon of the day he "thought big." While the war was still in progress his mind found relief from the anxious and sometimes depressing events of the day by contemplating the great developments that should follow the restoration of peace. Post-war reconstruction was a topic of vast interest to him, and had he remained in control of the *Daily Chronicle* there is no doubt that he would have employed it extensively as an advocate of great projects for national and imperial advancement.

Even while the war dragged its way indecisively through the year 1917, Donald was expounding a scheme that would effect a considerable improvement in continental and imperial communications and which, at the same time, would develop and beautify a congested corner of London. In an elaborate brochure, published by the *Daily Chronicle* under the title "Charing Cross to Bagdad," he outlined an ambitious scheme which linked the familiar project of a tunnel under the English Channel with a new bridge and international railway terminus at Charing Cross. Donald had always favoured the Channel Tunnel project, and this scheme was an effort to bring the subject again to public notice in an atmosphere that might be more favourable to its success.

He had some hundreds of copies of the brochure circulated among public men, and solicited their opinions for publication in the *Daily Chronicle*. Many of the replies were interesting examples of the art of evasion. The Prime Minister (Mr.

Lloyd George) considered the booklet "a most interesting document." Bonar Law was "glad to have the opportunity" of reading it. Balfour found it "very interesting." General Sir William Robertson said it was "admirably got up." There were, however, several eminent men who expressed definite opinions for or against the scheme. Lord Curzon "remained to be converted"; Lord Harcourt was similarly unconvinced, while Lord St. Davids thought the scheme "should be put in hand without a day's delay." The most interesting response among the scores which Donald retained was from Sir Robert Perks who, as the only survivor of the original subscribers to the Channel Tunnel Company of 1881, had followed the vicissitudes of the Tunnel project for more than thirty years. He declared that he could write a book upon the history of the Tunnel, and his letter moves one to regret that he has not done so.

Donald did not live to see even a fragment of his dream realized. He saw the Tunnel project rejected once again, and the proposal for the improvement of Charing Cross relegated to the obscurity of the distant future. But these set-backs did not discourage him. He took long views, and in some matters he moved far in advance of his time.

Shortly after the war he had the satisfaction of seeing a long step taken by an Imperial organization of which he was a founder-member. In 1909 he had joined with a number of distinguished journalists in establishing the Empire Press Union, with the aim of giving cohesion to the Press of the British Empire. To-day it seems surprising that, until 1909, no organization existed for that purpose; but such is the fact.

In 1907 Sir Harry Brittain, who had newspaper associations but was not a professional journalist, suggested to a gathering in Winnipeg that it would be good if editors representative of the Empire could be brought together. The idea was well received by an audience which included many journalists, and, on his return to London, Sir Harry explained it to Donald. At Donald's instigation, Sir Harry saw the first Lord Burnham,

and before long a committee was formed, with Lord Burnham as president, to carry the project into effect.

Two years later, in 1909, there was held in London the first Imperial Press Conference, an event of such importance that the late Lord Rosebery described it as marking "a distinct epoch in the history of the Empire." Useful as were the discussions of newspaper problems, the contact established between the editors and statesmen in London was the more important feature of the meeting, for it resulted in a conception of mutual responsibility, particularly in relation to imperial defence, which was of inestimable value during the Great War.

As an immediate sequel to this great parley, the Empire Press Union was brought into existence to continue the work begun by the Conference and to promote similar meetings in various parts of the Empire.

From its inception, Donald took an active part in the work of the Union. During the war he became chairman in succession to the Hon. Harry Lawson (the second Lord Burnham), who had been elected President of the Union on the death of his father. With the second Lord Burnham as its president, Donald as its chairman, and Lord Northcliffe as its treasurer, the Union had an exceptionally strong and vigorous trio to direct its activities, and, during the war, it rendered very valuable service to the Press of the Empire.

It had been intended that the second Imperial Press Conference should be held in Canada in 1915: but the intervention of the war made that impossible. With the restoration of peace, however, the plans for a Canadian conference were resuscitated, and in July, 1920, a party of eighty journalists sailed from Liverpool for the Dominion. Half of the number were representatives of the United Kingdom, and half were overseas journalists who had assembled in London. Other overseas representatives travelled to Canada without coming to Britain, and these, with the Canadian contingent, gave the opening session at Ottawa an attendance of three hundred journalists drawn from every part of the British Empire. Lord

Burnham acted as chairman of the Conference, and Robert Donald as vice-chairman.

The story of that remarkable gathering, of its deliberations and its tour of the Dominion, was told by Donald in a book<sup>1</sup> which he wrote soon after his return.

In addition to taking an active part in many of the discussions, Donald made several speeches at public and professional functions held in connection with the Conference. Some of these utterances made a lasting impression.

Before sailing for Canada he secured from official and other sources details of Canada's part in the war. It would seem that these facts had never been collated before Donald addressed himself to the task. Consequently, when he presented them to Canada in a speech at Halifax, Nova Scotia, soon after the party landed, they received wide publicity. He astonished Canadians by telling them "your shells supplied to the British Army were more than double the total bought from the United States, and were more than one-third of the whole shell production of the British factories, although before 1914, Canada had not made a single shell." On other occasions Donald spoke of the immensity of the entire imperial contribution to the war, of the enormous potentialities of the Empire and of the Empire's evolution as a free association of self-governing nations. It is noteworthy that in his speeches Donald did not allow his personal differences with Mr. Lloyd George to prevent him from according to the then Prime Minister generous praise for his labours for the Empire and for the pacification of Europe. "Mr. Lloyd George," he declared on one occasions, "remains the outstanding personality in international politics to-day."

At Quebec Donald won the regard of the French-Canadian journalists by a felicitous address delivered in French: "Mr. Donald," said the Montreal *Daily Star*, "met with an immediate response from his audience, struck a welcome chord in

<sup>1</sup> *The Imperial Press Conference in Canada*, by Robert Donald. Published by Hodder & Stoughton.

his friendly thoughts and met with a great demonstration when he closed."

When the Conference visited Toronto, a special meeting of the Convocation of Toronto University was held for the purpose of conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws upon four of the distinguished visitors, namely, Robert Donald, Sir Gilbert Parker, Sir Robert Bruce (editor of the *Glasgow Herald*), and Mr. Geoffrey Fairfax, of the *Morning Herald* of Sydney, Australia. After the ceremony Donald, called upon to speak on behalf of the four new doctors, delivered an address on the necessity for regulating the development of the English language and safeguarding of its purity. To his surprise, this theme aroused widespread interest, quotations from the address being reported by the Press in most parts of the Empire.

Donald was always very proud of his honorary degree and his association with Toronto University, so much so that it is doubtful whether the knighthood conferred upon him some years later gave him greater satisfaction. Equipped for life with nothing more than a parish school education he was conscious of what he had missed in being denied those opportunities for intellectual development which the collegiate life only can afford. That loss could never be made good, but he felt, no doubt, that the honour conferred at Toronto was a recognition that, in the larger university of life, he had graduated with some degree of distinction.

Donald was not able to accompany the delegates throughout their tour of the Dominion. He saw the business of the Conference through to its termination, made a presentation to the chairman, Lord Burnham, on behalf of the Conference, indulged in a little sight-seeing, and then was obliged to leave for home. He hoped on a later occasion to see Western Canada, but the opportunity never came.

To his great regret he was prevented from attending the third Imperial Press Conference which was held in 1925 in Australia, but he took a prominent part in the fourth Con-

ference, held in London in 1930. He continued to the end of his life his work for the Empire Press Union and maintained contact with journalists in almost every part of the Empire.

In the fourteen years of his association with this notable Imperial work, Donald was privileged to assist in bringing about a great change in the status and inter-relationship of the Press of the Empire. Through the conferences large numbers of editors and journalists from the ends of the British Commonwealth were brought in touch with one another, with statesmen and leaders of thought, and on two occasions with the Sovereign. The interchange of news between certain parts of the Empire and with the British Press was greatly improved. The London representatives of overseas newspapers were accorded access to official sources of news hitherto closed to them ; the gallery of the House of Commons, and even the Lobby, were opened to them. Cable and wireless rates were reduced and facilities improved, and in all that related to imperial communications the Empire Press Union came to exercise an important influence. Donald took a lively interest in all these developments, but it was perhaps the improvement and cheapening of wireless and cable communications throughout the Empire that appealed to him most, and upon these subjects he came to be regarded as an authority.

Before he left for the Empire Press Conference in Canada Donald's interest had been engaged by another great imperial project which had been mooted in pre-war days and which now seemed capable of realization, namely, the plan for the British Empire Exhibition which came to fruition in 1924 and 1925. In June, 1920, when the Exhibition was little more than a bundle of typescript, Donald was discussing the subject with interested parties. Under official encouragement the scheme was rapidly developed. The King gave his patronage ; the Prince of Wales accepted the Presidency of the Exhibition ; Parliament bestowed its blessing and supported the guarantee fund to the extent of £100,000.

So soon as the organization was set up Donald was invited



to join the Management Committee. Later he was appointed chairman of the Publicity Committee.

Few of the projects in which he interested himself during his busy life appealed to him so strongly as this ambitious demonstration of the Empire's resources and opportunities. For four years he was tireless in his efforts to ensure the success of the Exhibition. He gave generously of his time and his knowledge, often to the detriment of his professional affairs, and he neither sought nor received the smallest pecuniary reward. Much of his exertion was labour in vain.

Unfortunately, the directive organization of the Exhibition was not wisely planned at the outset. The governing body, known as the Executive Council, which was technically responsible for the arrangements, consisted of about 120 persons, many of whom appear to have taken their duties lightly. Too much was left to officials, who had no precedents to guide them, for no exhibition of the kind had ever been held.

To catalogue the weaknesses of the British Empire Exhibition is too easy a task to be worth undertaking. In considering the event in retrospect it is important to remember the circumstances of the period in which the enterprise had its inception. In the years immediately following the war, leaders of industry and others whose support was essential to the success of a project of this kind were deeply absorbed in their own affairs, adapting themselves to the tasks of the new epoch. But the reckless extravagance which had characterized the war period still perverted judgment. Leaders thought, and erred, in millions. The unbounded optimism with which the nation had addressed itself to reconstruction still lingered. What could withstand a generation that had emerged triumphant from such a test as the war! Great tasks were undertaken in a manner which to-day would be regarded as irresponsible.

Thus, the British Empire Exhibition which, first and last, cost a round twenty millions sterling, and ultimately relieved its guarantors of about two millions, appears to have been

planned, in some respects, without adequate thought, and even where correctly planned it did not always follow the lines laid down.

By the middle of 1922 Donald had grown distinctly uneasy about several aspects of the policy and work, and by the autumn of that year he was contemplating resignation.

There were two major matters upon which he was unable to see eye to eye with the Exhibition authorities. One was the admission of foreign timber into the construction of the Exhibition buildings at Wembley Park, and the other was the failure of the governing body to exclude foreign foodstuffs from catering contracts. As Donald visualized the Exhibition one of its primary purposes was to teach the people of Great Britain that the Empire could supply their every need. It was in the belief that this object underlay the scheme that the Dominions were subscribing to its funds and arranging exhibits.

At one time Donald seems, with the majority of his colleagues, to have accepted as inevitable the provision of a cosmopolitan cuisine in the restaurants, but he soon awakened to the fact that, no matter how awkward it might be for catering contractors to abandon traditional practices, this unique opportunity of showing the public that they could be fed excellently and entirely from the resources of the Empire must be seized and exploited to the full. But, to quote his own words, "it seemed to me that the members of the committee were considering supplies to an exhibition rather than supplies to a British Empire exhibition."

Similarly, he advocated a rigid exclusion of all foreign timber. The buildings being largely of concrete, the amount of wood needed, in relation to other materials, was small. Nevertheless, Donald felt that to demonstrate in 1920, by an Empire Timber Exhibition, that the Empire could supply all timber from its own resources, and then, four years later, to invite the Sovereign to stand on a dais of American pitch-pine to open this vast imperial fair, would be a betrayal of the whole purpose of the enterprise.

He represented his views to those in authority, but he made no progress. They replied that no caterer could be found to purchase the catering concession if restrictions so rigid as Donald wished to impose were incorporated in the contract.

As regards timber, they wished the fullest use to be made of Empire woods, but it was not always possible to obtain, at short notice from stocks of imperial material available in the country, certain kinds of timber that were urgently required. (This the Dominion agents stoutly denied.)

Donald was not satisfied with these answers; nor, he felt sure, would the Dominions be satisfied when they knew the facts. He came to the conclusion that resignation and a public disclosure of the state of affairs had become a duty.

He did not care to take a step so serious without consultation with someone whose opinion he respected, and soon a suitable opportunity occurred. On a Saturday morning early in October, 1922, Donald, who was kept indoors by indifferent health, had a visit from Bonar Law. At that time Bonar Law, recovered from the illness which had obliged him to resign the Conservative leadership and his office in the Coalition Government, had the status of a private member of Parliament.

Although in pre-war days the *Daily Chronicle*, under Donald's editorship, had criticized Bonar Law with all the acerbity common to political controversy at that period, when the two men had met in 1915, in the friendly atmosphere produced by the truce to party warfare, there had grown up a mutual regard which ripened into friendship.<sup>1</sup>

In his home at Rutland Gate, Donald told Bonar Law all that was in his mind about the British Empire Exhibition, and showed him a letter he had drafted, resigning his offices.

The nature of Bonar Law's advice can be deduced from a note which Donald addressed to the statesman on October 17th, in the course of which he said :

<sup>1</sup> Being conducted by Bonar Law's most intimate friend, Lord Beaverbrook's *Evening Standard* may be accepted as an authority on Bonar Law's relationships; and the *Evening Standard* has described Donald as "a great personal friend" of the Conservative leader.

As I have not been able to go out yet, I have not seen Mr. Baldwin,<sup>1</sup> but I wrote to him sending him a copy of my letter (of resignation) and also of the evidence which I printed in support of it. . . . I modified my letter considerably and I think I improved it.

In this note Donald proposed to see Bonar Law a few days later, but it is doubtful whether the meeting ever took place, because in the three following days the political crisis of 1922 moved swiftly to a climax, taking Bonar Law from his retirement and elevating him to the Premiership—a sequence of events of which he had not the smallest expectation when he sat with Donald a few days previously, discussing the problems of the British Empire Exhibition.

The fall of the Third Coalition Government overshadowed, but by no means obscured, the news of Donald's retirement from the Exhibition. From Donald's letter (which he circulated to the Press), the public, overseas as well as at home, learned for the first time that there was serious dissension in the councils of the Exhibition. Following the publication of Donald's charges, the policy of the governing body was defended vigorously in letters to the Press, but, ably as the other side of the case was stated, it failed to satisfy public opinion. Press comment was almost wholly against the policy of the Exhibition. The London representatives of the Dominions were among Donald's most staunch champions: some of them came out publicly in support of him. The Canadian Government flatly declined to proceed with its plans for participation in the Exhibition until a solution of the difficulties had been reached. As indicative of Australian feeling, a highly placed Australian in writing to Donald congratulating him on his courageous action said: "Were I Prime Minister of Australia, I would politely but firmly tell the committee that if they adhered to the decision taken, Australia would have nothing to do with the Exhibition."

<sup>1</sup> Then President of the Board of Trade.

Indeed, throughout the many letters which Donald received from representative men of the Dominions, the same note of indignation is sounded. The writers were all of opinion that in an exhibition whose purpose was to reveal the resources of the British Empire, nothing of foreign origin, however trivial the quantity, should be admitted if similar material could be obtained within the Empire.

On the Management Committee of the Exhibition Donald's protest had no effect. Acknowledging it, the Chairman wrote tersely :

I laid your letter before my colleagues at the Management Committee this afternoon. In accepting your resignation they desired me to express their regret that you should have effected it in a manner liable to prejudice the interests of the Exhibition."

That was all. Not even a formal word of thanks for the work he had done was dropped in to dilute the acidity of the communication.

Donald, however, was confident that the action he had taken was in the best interests of the Exhibition, and that, in the end, events would justify him. Justification came swiftly. Soon after the general election which confirmed him in the Premiership, Bonar Law took steps to deal with the Exhibition's troubles.

He deputed Sir William Joynson-Hicks,<sup>1</sup> the new Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade, then enjoying his first and belated experience of office, to make an inquiry into the various matters which were the subject of controversy, and in this inquiry Donald was one of the most important witnesses.

Before Sir William began his report, the ground of Donald's principal criticism was removed. The Exhibition authorities promised the Government that provision would be made "in all contracts and in every other way possible" for Empire

<sup>1</sup> Later Lord Brentford.

materials to be used exclusively in the construction of the Exhibition buildings ; and for Empire products only to be used in the restaurants. No exception whatever would be made unless the British authorities and the Dominion representatives certified that such Empire products were not available.

The only other point in the terms of reference which concerned Donald intimately was the relationship of the Publicity Committee to the actual work of advertising the Exhibition, and here Sir William Joynson-Hicks's report met his criticism in a wholly satisfactory way.

Finally, Sir William expressed a view long held by Donald, that an executive committee of " something like 120 members is quite incapable of exercising effective control over the management," and he recommended considerable changes in the organization of the Exhibition.

Donald emerged from the inquiry in a highly creditable manner. " I should like to say," observed Sir William in his report, " that Mr. Donald was actuated by a desire to do everything in his power to achieve the object of making the Exhibition a thorough success from the Imperial point of view, and by a fear that if matters were allowed to go on as they were going, the full Imperial possibilities of the Exhibition would not be realized."

Joynson-Hicks followed up this comment by a letter to Donald appealing to him to do all in his power to further the success of the project.

The appeal was scarcely necessary. With the purposes of the Exhibition thus clarified, Donald was only too willing to help, and when the Management Committee, after what seemed to be a moment of hesitation, accepted the recommendations of the report, he withdrew his resignation and returned to the work.

Donald would not wish it to be claimed that his action saved the Exhibition, but it needs little imagination to visualize what would have happened had the authorities

pursued the policy against which he protested. Inevitably, at some later date, when perhaps it would have been too late to correct the mischief, the Dominions would have discovered what had been done, and their indignation might have resulted in abstentions and withdrawals such as would have wrecked, or seriously injured the undertaking, besides bringing the Empire into derision in the sight of the world at large.

As it was, although the Exhibition was far from being a financial success, it did achieve its purpose in demonstrating the immense resources of the British Empire, and it contributed greatly to that better understanding of the potentialities of Imperial co-operation which now obtains in Great Britain.

Though, in his career, Donald had waged many a fight, he had fought hitherto as the editor of a newspaper, aided by the great influence which a newspaper can wield. On this occasion, however, he had no artillery at his command. It was a hand-to-hand encounter in which the forces ranged against him at the outset seemed overwhelming. The history of the controversy showed, however, that although Donald had lost the powerful help which control of a newspaper affords, he remained a person of considerable influence and authority.

Genial and urbane though he was, Donald could be very tenacious and combative in controversy. He was never overawed by the strength of the forces arrayed against him. "Peace at any price" was not his motto. He was not one of those individuals who, in order to win a reputation of never making an enemy, will sacrifice their own judgment, compromise on any principle and trim their sails to every breeze that may bring them to that harbour where—in public at all events—all men will speak well of them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### COMMISSIONS AND INQUIRIES

**T**HERE can be few forms of public service more altruistic than membership of Royal Commissions and those committees which are appointed from time to time by the Cabinet or by departments of the Government. Commissions and committees are notoriously too often a means by which an administration obtains relief from the pressure of some problem, tedious and long standing, with the details of which the Ministry and Parliament are imperfectly acquainted. Yet such bodies never fail for lack of able and public-spirited persons, prepared to do the prescribed work without so much encouragement as the assurance that their conclusions will be accepted by the Government, still less that their recommendations will be carried into effect.

In seven years Robert Donald gave his services to four such bodies, in some instances with useful results, and in others without any discernible effect.

His first appointment came in 1917 when he was busily engaged in editorship and in propaganda work on behalf of the Government. Nevertheless, he found time to sit upon a departmental committee set up by Dr. Addison, then Minister of Reconstruction, "to consider and report upon the steps to be taken to secure the better co-ordination of public assistance in England and Wales, and upon such other matters affecting the system of local government as may from time to time be referred to it." The chairman was Sir Donald Maclean, and the members included such diverse and interesting personalities as Lord George Hamilton, Sir Robert Morant, Mr. J. H. Thomas and Mrs. Sidney Webb.



The report of this committee was notable not only for being unanimous, but also for recommending the abolition of Boards of Guardians and the Poor Law Union, and the merging of all the functions of the Poor Law authorities in those of the County Councils and County Borough Councils. It advised the creation of "Home Assistance Committees" for the administration of outdoor relief. The Government of the day accepted the policy recommended by the Committee, but to the Conservative Ministry of 1929 remained the task of abolishing the Boards of Guardians and bringing into being the Public Assistance Committees.

Whether the title recommended by the Maclean Committee was a better one than that finally selected is a matter of opinion; but there will be some who will consider that the first designation, Home Assistance Committee, goes a little farther towards removing the stigma of the old Poor Law system.

In October, 1921, the Coalition Ministry caused a Royal Commission to be set up to examine the system of government for Greater London. According to its terms of reference, the Commission was to "inquire and report what alterations are needed in the local government of the administrative county of London and the surrounding districts with a view to securing greater efficiency and economy in the administration of the local government services and to reducing any inequalities which may exist in the distribution of local burdens as between different parts of the whole area."

Robert Donald was one of those who were appointed to this large task, and among others were Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Mr. G. J. Talbot, K.C. (later Mr. Justice Talbot), Mr. Stephen Walsh (who became Labour's first Secretary of State for War), and Sir Albert Gray, K.C.

For the chairmanship the Government secured the services of Lord Ullswater, who, as Mr. William Lowther, had recently retired from the speakership of the House of Commons after a long and distinguished tenure of office.

In the course of its deliberations, extending over a year and a half, the commission lost two of its members, one of them, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, resigning on appointment to Mr. Bonar Law's administration.

The eight survivors were far from being agreed in their recommendations. Four members only signed the main report, and one of these was constrained to add a separate memorandum embodying views of his own. The other four paired off and made two minority reports, Donald associating himself with Stephen Walsh. The various recommendations of the Commission are of small interest to-day, but it is worth noting that Donald and Walsh, in their advice on London's transport system (which was the only subject on which the Commission's work proved to be of practical value), arrived nearer to the policy ultimately carried into effect by the National Government of 1933 than did their colleagues. Writing of the transport recommendations made by Walsh and himself, Donald said, in 1931, "While I thought I was looking ahead, our recommendations in regard to transport are already out of date. . . . Nothing but the complete unification of all the means of transport in greater London—electric and tube railways, suburban services of main line railways, tramways and omnibus services—will solve the problem."

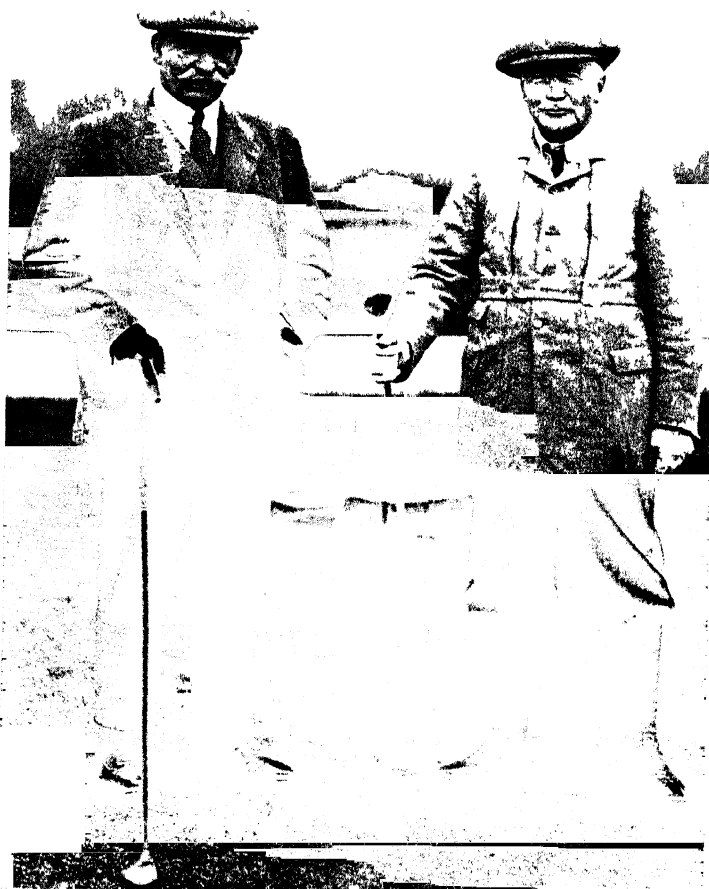
Membership of the Ullswater Commission was Donald's last official service in the cause of better local government in London. Through his periodical, the *Municipal Journal*, and in many unostentatious ways, Donald continued to be actively concerned with the subject, so that it may be said that his interest extended from 1888, when as a reporter on *The Star* he was assigned the task of "cleansing the Augean stables of London's local government," down to the end of his life, a period of forty-five years. "His death," wrote Sir Edward Hilton Young, Minister of Health, in a foreword to the *Municipal Year Book* which Donald founded, "was the loss of a man whose services to local government were many and great."

Yet local government was but one of several spheres of service in which Robert Donald was profoundly interested and to which he devoted a considerable amount of thought and energy.

The application of wireless telegraphy to the needs of the country and to the development of the Empire was a question that engaged his attention almost from the time that radio communication became a commercial possibility. The Imperial Press Conference of 1909 found him an eager auditor of the opinions of overseas delegates upon the advisability of establishing a chain of wireless stations between the units of the Empire. The Conference urged such a project upon the Government "both for the cheapening of electrical communications and for the safety of the mercantile marine."

That the Government's response was scarcely satisfactory is plain from the disadvantage in which, at the outbreak of war, the Empire found itself in relation to Germany in the matter of wireless communication. According to one of Donald's statements on the subject, Germany, in 1914, had the most efficient wireless service in the world, and was so far in advance of British equipment that the first war news received in India consisted of German messages arriving by wireless several days ahead of British news.

During the war wireless telegraphy developed rapidly, and it became the obvious duty of the Empire Press Union to bring the subject of imperial communications prominently to the notice of Governments throughout the Empire at the earliest opportunity. Thus, at the Imperial Press Conference at Ottawa in 1920, the urgent necessity of linking the Empire by wireless was the subject of one of the most important debates. Donald spoke upon it in a manner which showed that he had followed all developments with an informed mind and a critical eye. The Government, he said, had muddled the business from beginning to end. Its departmental committee on the subject had produced a "small, peddling scheme," proposing a system that was already obsolete.



AL COLI WITH THE BISHOP OF LONDON

He was the most go- to-ter- per- d and finally adversary- the Bishop is written



A suitable resolution was passed unanimously, but it is doubtful whether that action would have stimulated the authorities but for the manner in which a few ardent advocates of the ideal, of whom Donald was one of the most prominent, had pressed the subject incessantly upon the notice of the British Government.

One of the chief obstacles to progress lay in the question of ownership, the Government having, in 1911, established the principle that Empire wireless should be owned and operated by the State, a principle which appears never to have been brought into proper relationship with the fact that private enterprise, in the form of the Marconi Company, was bearing the burden of research and development of the new science. With the rapid progress made in the decade following the Government's decision, a considerable conflict of interest arose.

In 1923 Bonar Law as Prime Minister announced a change of policy. "The Government," he said, "are no longer prepared to exclude private enterprise from participation in wireless telegraphy within the Empire." In the interests of national security, however, the Government had decided that there must be one wireless station, owned and operated by the State, capable of communicating with the Dominions ; and to that extent there would be competition.

To translate this policy of compromise into a working arrangement proved impracticable. At all events, after nine months of negotiation between the Post Office and the Marconi Company, no settlement was reached.

In the meantime, however, the first Labour Government had attained office, and according to the late Vernon Hartshorn, who became Postmaster-General, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in asking him to take that office told him that "the one thing that he desired to impress upon him, above all, was the importance of setting up an imperial wireless service.

Within a fortnight the new Postmaster-General appointed a committee to advise him on the subject, and to the chair-

manship he appointed Robert Donald, the other members being Sir Henry Slessor (then Solicitor-General), Sir Drummond Fraser, Professor W. H. Eccles, and Mr. F. J. Brown (then Assistant Secretary of the Post Office).

The terms of reference charged the committee to consider and advise "without delay" on the policy to be adopted "as regards imperial wireless services, so as to protect and facilitate public interest."

It is doubtful whether any official committee ever discharged its duty in a matter of such importance with such celerity. The Donald Committee held its first meeting on February 8th, 1924, and presented its report—a unanimous statement—on February 22nd, a feat upon which the Committee was warmly congratulated by the Press, which, by depressing experience, had begun to associate the imperial wireless question with dilatory procedure and abortive negotiations.

The report of the Donald Committee recommended a reversal of the Bonar Law policy. It advised that the State, through the Post Office, should own all the wireless stations in Great Britain for communication with the overseas Dominions, Colonies, Protectorates, and Territories: and that the Post Office should operate directly, "under an improved business organization," all the Empire stations in Great Britain.

Except by the Marconi Company, whose objections were natural and expected, the report was well received, both at home and overseas. Even the Postmaster-General of the preceding Government, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, admitted that the recommendations of the Committee were inevitable, having regard to the history of the controversy.

After due consideration, the Government adopted the main recommendations of the Donald Committee, and the necessary legislation was passed by the House of Commons.

One phrase of the recommendations necessitated a further inquiry. The "improved business organization" of the Post Office, which was considered essential to the successful

operation of the wireless stations, was destined to give trouble. Many of those who looked askance at the ideal of State ownership did so primarily because they lacked faith in the ability of the Post Office to manage the new development with that enterprise and courage which, obviously, it demanded.

The *Morning Post* stated succinctly the fear of large numbers of business men when it observed, "Permanent officials, even if they are accessible to new ideas, are reluctant to take risks."

Hence it was that in May, 1924, the Cabinet decided that a committee should be set up to advise upon what the "improved organization" of the Post Office should be. Donald was appointed to the chairmanship, but when he surveyed the names of the Committee he was not happy about his new and difficult task. As he revealed later, the committee "originally consisted of three Civil Servants, Sir Alfred Mond and myself. Had the membership not been enlarged it was our intention to resign."

When at Donald's request the Committee was extended, the Government added to it Sir Arthur Balfour, the Sheffield industrialist, Sir Edwin Stockton of Manchester, Sir Campbell Stuart of *The Times*, and Mr. W. J. Bowen of the Union of Post Office Workers.

Whether a committee of nine, of whom three were Civil Servants and one an official of a postal workers' union, was the ideal body to deal with the subject, was a question about which much controversy proceeded after the committee had come to an inconclusive end. Sir Alfred Mond held strongly that it was not. Borrowing the terminology of the card-room, he complained in a speech: "We were euchred all the time by having internal administrative difficulties hurled at our heads."

The Committee devoted much time to its task, sitting regularly throughout the summer of 1924, but it had not reached agreement when the Labour Government resigned and a Conservative administration came into office. Automatically, that change put the Committee into suspense for a



time, and ultimately the new Government decided not to reappoint it, a decision which was influenced by Donald's opinion, communicated to the new Postmaster-General (Sir William Mitchell-Thomson), that the prospect of the Committee reaching any agreed conclusions was remote. Donald had, however, drafted a report which had received a substantial measure of support from those of his colleagues who represented business interests, and that document he submitted to the Postmaster-General for consideration. With the decisions taken ultimately by the Minister, involving a relatively small readjustment of Post Office organization, Donald was unable to agree. He expressed his disagreement publicly and with such effect that Sir William Mitchell-Thomson was obliged to defend his action in the matter.

It was scarcely likely that Donald's conception of what was needed would accord with what the official mind was disposed to approve, for Donald was thinking, not so much of the state of development which the science of wireless had then reached, but of its potentialities. To him, the problem was not one of coping with the service that wireless was then able to give, or might be required to give in the immediate future, but of laying the foundations of an organization that would be related to the large developments that were certain to come, an organization that would be capable of easy expansion to conform with every development. Moreover, his mind was much engaged by the probable consequences of an increasing conflict of interest between cable and wireless services. He was thinking of how that conflict could be averted or mitigated, and how the best service to the Empire could be extracted from both cables and wireless. "To merge wireless in the general administration of the telegraphs and telephones, and to place it under the control of officials who have neither expert knowledge nor experience of this highly specialized business, is to make failure inevitable," was the view he expressed to the Empire Press Union. The traditional methods of the Civil Service would, he maintained, be

“especially baneful in the case of the developing science and expanding business of wireless.”

Four years later, under pressure of inevitable developments, the Government were moved to summon an Imperial Wireless Conference, whose recommendations resulted in the merging of British wireless and cable interests in the Imperial Communications Company with a capital of £30 millions.

The rapid development of the Beam system between 1924 and 1928 had changed the problem in some respects, and the varying policies of the Dominions in the matter of ownership of wireless had affected the position as it existed in 1924. Consequently, when the recommendations of 1928 were made Donald was able to give them cordial support.

It would be idle to claim that Donald foresaw all the subsequent developments, but it is undeniable that he visualized in 1924—vaguely, perhaps, but with sufficient clarity to make him bold and confident in his advocacy—the immensity of future developments.

For about eight years, from 1920 onwards, Donald's agitation for a more intelligent handling of the question of imperial wireless services scarcely ceased. By articles, letters and speeches he pressed the subject upon the attention of the Government and the country. Others might tire of the agitation, but he did not. Critics might trip him now and then on questions of detail or detect minor inconsistencies in his many speeches and letters, but he was never diverted from his principal objectives by such checks, nor did he relax his efforts until he saw the problem solved in a manner that gave a large degree of satisfaction.

In the course of the struggle, his work received recognition. On the King's birthday in 1924 he was appointed a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire, for his public service in general, and particularly in recognition of his Chairmanship of the Imperial Wireless Committee.

The bestowal of this honour upon Donald evoked many generous tributes from the Press. There were allusions to

his public work in the leading articles of the principal newspapers ; and journalists all over the country and overseas used the occasion to recall personal associations.

For the second time in six years Donald was made the guest of honour at a public luncheon. On July, 1924, at the Criterion Restaurant, a large body of journalists joined with distinguished representatives of politics, literature, public services and business in entertaining him. The Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald), prevented from attending, sent a letter paying tribute to Donald's public work and "to the honest independence of which all his journalistic activities bear the hall mark." To Lord Burnham's felicitous speech, T. P. O'Connor and the Marquis of Lincolnshire added their encomiums. Donald replied briefly, and it was characteristic of him that, of the short time which he occupied in replying to the speeches, he devoted several minutes to commending to the generosity of the company a scheme for enabling young journalists to travel the Empire.

## CHAPTER XV

### BOOKS AND SPEECHES

MANY men whose gifts would be of value to the community decline to follow the path of public duty for the reason that they are unable to retire from their gainful occupations. The wisdom of this attitude cannot be questioned ; and yet it is plain that public life would be much the poorer were every man to adopt it.

At no time was public service easy to Robert Donald. Never during his whole life was he free from professional labour. Had he chosen to do so, he might have retired from journalism when he resigned the editorship of the *Daily Chronicle*. Then, with a comfortable degree of economic independence assured, he might have devoted himself entirely to public life. But journalism, practised as he practised it, is a public service, and evidently he believed that he could best advance the causes that interested him by continuing his professional life. In the sequel, by sinking his capital in a newspaper that was doomed, he impaired his usefulness in other directions. Thereafter he could not abandon journalism, even if he had desired to do so ; and he would not abandon those causes which interested him.

From 1925 onwards his professional position was peculiar. He remained proprietor of the *Municipal Journal* and its allied publications, but, for the rest, his work was that of an adviser on newspaper production. In that capacity he held certain directorships, but in many instances his services were enlisted without any such association being set up. The presence among his papers of copies of two lengthy and critical memoranda on the *Sunday News* (owned by the *Daily*

*Chronicle*) suggests that one of the later controllers of the *Daily Chronicle* had recourse to Donald's experience. If the advice were sought, it was not followed. Reform at that period might well have prevented the demise of the paper in 1931.

It is, however, a fact well proven that those who know most are always ready to learn more; and it is, therefore, not surprising to find that among those who availed themselves of Donald's experience was Viscount Rothermere, whose life-long association with newspaper production might well have produced in him the conviction that he had no more to learn. Lord Rothermere had a high opinion of Donald's journalistic capacity, and always gave serious consideration to his views.

In this Lord Rothermere followed the example of his brother, Lord Northcliffe. Some time before Donald became editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Northcliffe had recognized Donald's ability. "A first-class descriptive reporter and as accurate as a stop watch," was the opinion of Donald which Northcliffe (then Alfred Harmsworth) expressed to Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld when those two remarkable men were associated in the production of the *Daily Mail* in the 'nineties. About that time Alfred Harmsworth wished to enlist Donald as one of his coadjutors, and offered him his own price. But while Donald recognized Harmsworth's journalistic genius and foresaw a great future for him, he felt that their political ideals could never be reconciled and would render their co-operation impossible.

Donald's fears were well founded. In later years, when he was editing the *Daily Chronicle*, there were many angry exchanges of journalistic musketry between that paper and the *Daily Mail*. There was a time when some personal sniping from the Carmelite House side entered into these engagements. An attempt was made to belittle Donald's journalistic prestige by describing him as "formerly advertising manager of the Gordon Hotels," but the shot rebounded from the target at which it was aimed, and whistled through the camp of the advertising community, who, though less assertive and self-

regarding than they are to-day, strongly resented the use of such a fact as a term of disparagement.

But such incidents (and there were others) left no rancour. Northcliffe and Donald met on the common ground of the Empire Press Union and were subsequently associated in the work of national propaganda during the war.

Thus it happened that when Donald no longer had a newspaper under his own direction, the *Daily Mail* and other papers under Lord Rothermere's control frequently called upon him for articles, or offered him a platform when he wished to engage public attention.

In spite of the many claims upon his time Donald contrived to accomplish a surprising amount of free-lance writing during the last years of his life. And he displayed all the versatility of the born journalist, contributing weighty sociological articles to reviews, lively political comments on topics of the hour to the daily and Sunday newspapers, and light, informative essays to the popular periodicals. On one occasion, soon after the conferment of his knighthood, he attended a meeting of the Council of Nations at Geneva and wrote a series of messages on its proceedings for a group of newspapers.

For the first time in his career he was able to find time to write books. In his early days he had written some pamphlets, the first being a little work of some thirty pages, published in 1895 and entitled *Six Years' Service for the People*, which set forth the record of the newly constituted London County Council. Donald had compiled several reference books also; and, as related, he edited, in 1920, the story of the second Imperial Press Conference.

He has been credited with the authorship of a popular book entitled, *Lloyd George and the War*, by "An Independent Liberal," but his papers disclose no evidence to sustain that belief. That he was concerned in its publication is certain, but it is significant that in the contract for its publication he is described, not as the author, but as "the owner," which

suggests that he was acting on behalf of someone who, for good reasons, did not wish to reveal his identity.

In 1925, however, Donald made his first considerable effort in authorship in a book entitled, *A Danger Spot in Europe*, in which he gave a concise history of the French incursion into the Saar Valley and of the government of that territory by the League of Nations. His study of the problem and his prolonged investigations in the Saar Valley led him to criticize vigorously the conduct of the League and of France. He took a pessimistic view of the future, expressing the fear that, as the plebiscitary period approached, France would find an excuse for military intervention and continued occupation. Forcible annexation might occur, and "if such a crime against international law and treaty rights were committed, the League of Nations would be a mere, helpless onlooker. Such an outrage against humanity would mean the end of the League and also of the Treaty of Versailles." These views were expressed, of course, long before the Nazi movement became dominant in Germany, and whether that subsequent development would have affected Donald's attitude to the Saarois it is impossible to say. His political principles would certainly have made him hostile to the Hitler policy generally.

His next book, published in 1928, was *The Tragedy of Trianon : Hungary's Appeal to Humanity*. Donald's interest in this much-discussed subject was not a post-war irruption. In January, 1914, he had visited the territory subsequently affected by the Treaty, and had acquainted himself with its political problems and racial antipathies. Consequently, when the time of peace-making arrived he took more than a superficial interest in the Treaty of Trianon and its effects.

In post-war years he paid occasional visits to Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia, and in 1927 he travelled both countries, and a little of the new Roumania, making investigations preparatory to writing his book. His discoveries (spiced by the novel experience of continuous surveillance of his movements

and correspondence in Czecho-Slovakia) made him an ardent advocate of revision of the peace treaty in favour of Hungary.

Donald's friendship with Lord Rothermere, and the fact that Lord Rothermere wrote a foreword to *The Tragedy of Trianon*, have suggested to some who read his book that Donald's work was part of the Rothermere campaign.

There is nothing in Donald's papers which justifies such a deduction, and Lord Rothermere affirms that Donald acted entirely on his own initiative. Donald's knowledge of the country affected, extending over thirteen eventful years at least, and his instinctive interest in any situation which suggested oppression and injustice, are factors which go to show that no inspiration was necessary to cause him to study the subject.

The third and last of his books on European problems dealt with a subject no less controversial than its predecessors. It was entitled *The Polish Corridor and its Consequences*, and was written in 1929 after a tour of three months in the disputed territory. His survey was not, and could not be, a comforting one to those who hoped for peace in Europe on the basis of the post-war treaties. He sums up a painstaking recital of facts and opinions with the statement :

“The grim realization of the situation is that to-day, along the Eastern frontier (of Germany), conditions resemble war-time more than did the state of things in 1914. Every element associated with the genesis and provocation of war challenges you : distrust, jealousy, the spirit of revenge, unjust treatment of minorities, resentment, racial hatred.”

Nevertheless, he considered that the inevitability of war should be excluded, and he took heart from the “birth in Germany of a new and fruitful spirit. The drill-sergeant,” he continued, “has given place to the philosopher. . . . Instead of mobilizing armed forces whose ultimate function in dire necessity is the destruction of life, this movement seeks to



mobilize the moral forces of the world to save humanity." This reading of the situation has, of course, been voided by subsequent events in Germany, but those changes, drastic though they be, do not impair the value of Donald's work as a survey of facts and as an exposition of possible solutions of a problem which menaces the peace of Europe.

On the publication of this book Donald sent copies to a few friends in high places, men who, in every instance, had specialized knowledge of the problem. Their comments upon the book and on the subject with which it dealt, were not written for publication, and it would be improper to reproduce them here, but they constitute a tribute to the manner in which Donald had grasped, not only the essentials, but much of the detail of an admittedly intricate question.

Incidentally, this series of books is interesting for the manner in which it demonstrates Donald's skill as an investigator of facts and as a commentator upon them. In spite of many diversions and distractions from the paths of journalism he remained, pre-eminently, a journalist, and as Lord Northcliffe had judged him more than thirty years previously, "a first-class descriptive reporter."

At no time was there any diminution in Donald's interest in journalists and journalism. Always a student of the development of the profession and of the newspaper industry, his authority upon these subjects grew with the passing years. It was recognized soon after the war when Mr. J. L. Garvin, addressing the formidable task of re-editing the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, asked Donald to write the chapter on newspapers. "That chapter," declared Mr. Garvin, in an obituary tribute to its author, "crammed with specific knowledge, yet indicating the choice of principles for the future, remains the best existing survey of the subject."

Occasionally Donald delivered addresses on the Press, but not often, for in later years public speaking seemed to become less attractive to him. Listening to him it was difficult to believe that he had once displayed great promise as a

parliamentary candidate, and at a time when the standard of political speaking was higher than it is to-day.

Notoriously, journalists are indifferent speakers. The urge of the trained writer to find the precise phrase, the inevitable word, is constantly at war with the speaker's instinct to forge ahead with his theme and to leave it free to inspire its own form of expression. Donald suffered from this conflict, and he was happier in reading a paper than in extemporary address.

Of his utterances on newspaper subjects during the later years of his life, two are notable. One of these was an address to the Manchester Luncheon Club in 1925, in which he dealt with "The Future of the Press."

Here he devoted considerable attention to the growth of newspaper-owning combines. He predicted (and subsequent events justified the forecast) that the process of newspaper consolidation was far from ended, but that, eventually, disintegration would set in. The difference between an industrial combination and a newspaper combination, he pointed out, was that an industrial combine dealt with material things, while the other dealt with educational and moral things. The newspapers stood in the relationship of moral trustees, and the assembling of a vast number of newspapers under one control was not, in his view, compatible with the independence and freedom of the Press. A syndicate controlled by one Press magnate was a gramophone press, with its editors either part of the vast machine or having no responsibility for editorial opinion. He took the opportunity of condemning the proposal then before Parliament to restrict the publication of reports of divorce cases, believing that it would be better to give the newspapers the opportunity of co-operating in disciplining themselves in the matters to which the Bill referred. Broadcasting would have its influence on the Press of the future. The arrangement by which the newspapers were able to restrict the news services of the Broadcasting Corporation could not be maintained for ever. Wireless subscribers would insist upon getting more news, and that development, he

believed, would constitute a check upon the accuracy of newspapers.

A more adventurous address was the paper on the same subject which he read to the Institute of Journalists in 1928, and which is reproduced in full elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of this lecture Donald made the prediction : " In the near future there will be three fewer morning newspapers in London, and two more evening papers." This remark, taken in conjunction with his conviction that the great combines would further extend their ramifications, raised the ire of the *Daily News*. On the morning after the lecture that newspaper barked a twofold challenge at the lecturer. In its news columns, with a degree of asperity unusual in a journal which so often contained homilies on goodwill and tolerance, it described Donald's address as " A silly speech." But it made up for that outburst by giving Donald the opportunity of elaborating his point. Donald explained that he meant " that within the next twenty years there would be three fewer daily papers. I did not name them ; in fact I did not have any particular three in mind. They may go out by amalgamation, but they will go out. I feel perfectly safe in prophesying that."

In its editorial comment the *Daily News* disclosed what was, no doubt, the real reason for the attack, for it employed the incident to proclaim its own independence of newspaper trusts and its freedom from " chain control and opinion."

Donald was not perturbed, though it was the first time the adjective " silly " had ever been applied to his opinions. He had given himself twenty years for the justification of his prediction. He was content to wait.

In less than two years one of London's great morning papers disappeared by way of amalgamation. On June 2nd, 1930, the *Daily News* made its first appearance as the "*News Chronicle*," having absorbed, overnight, its contemporary and rival, the *Daily Chronicle*.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE "DAILY CHRONICLE"

**A**FTER Frank Lloyd's retirement and Donald's resignation the *Daily Chronicle* passed through three phases of ownership.

The first was commonly spoken of as the Lloyd George regime, for although Mr. Lloyd George occupied no office in the proprietary company, it was evident that the paper was Mr. Lloyd George's megaphone, and that, in political matters, it amplified the voice of its master with unfailing fidelity. Here was the subservience which Mr. Lloyd George had been unable to command of Douglas Haig and Robert Donald.

For about four years following the purchase of the paper by Mr. Lloyd George's friends, Sir Henry Dalziel was the chairman and managing director of the company, but in 1922, about a year after his elevation to the peerage as Lord Dalziel of Kircaldy, the new recruit to the Liberal aristocracy divested himself of all his newspaper interests. Thereafter, until 1926, the board of United Newspapers (1918) Limited consisted of the Right Honourable C. A. McCurdy, K.C. (Chairman), Brigadier-General E. B. Cuthbertson, Major G. Lloyd George, Mr. J. H. Parham, Mr. E. A. Perris, and Sir Howard Spicer.

During the Lloyd George regime there were several developments. A number of newspapers published outside London were brought into alliance with the *Daily Chronicle*, notably the *Edinburgh Evening News*, which had been a supporter of the Asquithian wing of the Liberal Party, and the *Yorkshire Evening News*, whose offices and organization in Leeds provided the nucleus of a northern publishing office for the *Daily Chronicle*, where were produced each night

specially prepared editions for circulation throughout the north of England and in Scotland. This extension enabled the *Daily Chronicle*, in the leading article of its twenty thousandth issue, to speak of its "ever-growing circle of readers."

In 1925 United Newspapers (1918) Limited was converted from a private to a public company. Previously, its issued capital consisted of £1,225,005, in preference and ordinary shares of £1 denomination. Now its capital was rearranged, and a public issue was made of £550,000 preference shares of £1 each, carrying  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent interest.

It was about the time of this issue, according to the recollection of a *Chronicle* journalist, that a meeting of the staff was held, and employees of the company were invited to take advantage of this opportunity of becoming partners in the enterprise.

Meetings of the staff were of very exceptional occurrence, and, inevitably, when the 1925 meeting was held, the minds of many of those present went back to the series of gatherings held seven years previously to inform the staff of Donald's resignation and of the coming of the new regime. Those were sad, November days. Now it was early summer; sunshine flooded the room to reinforce the golden prospects which were described to the meeting. The papers, it was said, were entering upon a new phase in which former achievements, however notable, were to be outstripped. Further capital was necessary. Of course, it would be easily secured. The point for the meeting, however, was that if the staff cared to participate, in large or small degrees, now was their opportunity. The details of the issue were recited . . .  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent interest (6 per cent net). . . . Could it be beaten? . . . Security? Well, look around—freehold property, plant, stock, goodwill, and the *Daily Chronicle*! And more. To those who had the will, but not the ready cash, the proprietors would advance the purchase money, the new shareholder repaying the loan by instalments from his salary.



THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN OF SIR ROBERT  
With him is Major Sir Ralph Glynn, Bt, M P



No one had greater faith in the *Daily Chronicle* than its staff. Some of those present had seen it rise from its obscurity as the *Clerkenwell News* and had travelled with it, through the days of adversity in the early years of the century, and had marched with it through the steady, unbroken advance to prosperity under Donald's editorship.

The staff, mechanical as well as editorial, responded to the invitation now extended. The total amount subscribed by them is put by one of the subscribers at £25,000—not an immense sum in relation to the authorized capital of the company, but it incorporated many a man's hard-won savings.

For a time these new shareholders were satisfied. Dividends were forthcoming. The scheme appeared to be working out according to promise. The golden years seemed indeed to be returning.

But little more than a year later—in November, 1926—came a change. Suddenly, the Lloyd George regime ended, and the papers passed into the hands of two wealthy India merchants, Sir David Yule, Bart., and Sir Thomas Catto, Bart., with whom was associated the Marquis of Reading as the leader of the enterprise, and the new chairman of the company. The purchase price of the properties was reported to be approximately £3,000,000, and the transaction was later reflected in the formation of the Daily Chronicle Investment Corporation Limited, with an authorized capital of £3,050,000.

The arrangement seemed to be an admirable one from Mr. Lloyd George's point of view. The sale was regarded as replenishing his political war chest after the elections of 1923 and 1924, and fortifying it for the next contest, at the same time committing the newspapers to the control of an old friend and former colleague. Mr. Lloyd George had the ha'pence, and the cake was transferred to friendly hands.

Fleet Street, however, was surprised by the new development. The great merchants who were associated with the new regime were scarcely known in that street where, of many subjects and persons, more is known than is published.



Research showed Sir David Yule to be a Scotsman who, going to India in his teens, had made himself one of the great magnates of the East. He had been made a knight in 1912, and a baronet in 1922. His interests were said to extend to more than a hundred companies, trading in transport, power, jute, coal and other commodities. Banking, too, came within his purview. Fleet Street noted, in its well-thumbed *Who's Who*, that Sir David had staked out no more than six lines as his claim to fame, and marvelled that a man so modest should, within sight of his seventieth year, be venturing into newspaper proprietorship.

The other baronet (created 1921) was a little better known, for he had served on various missions during the war. Afterwards he had become associated with Sir David Yule in his Indian enterprises. Though like Sir David, Sir Thomas was a Scotsman, he was of another generation, a man still in the forties.

Rufus Daniel Isaacs, Marquis of Reading, was in an entirely different category. He was a great figure, a national leader. His entry into Fleet Street was an event so exceptional that a brief survey of his history is not irrelevant to a narrative intimately concerned with the newspaper history of the period.

Lord Reading had long provided raw material for the journalist's craft. Some Fleet Street men had no doubt related, in the best Samuel Smiles manner, the story of the youngster who had sailed up the Hooghly as a ship's boy, holystoning the deck and burnishing the brass, and who, some forty years later, had descended a gangway at Bombay, to the thunder of a Royal salute, as Viceroy of India. If their narratives omitted to state that the poor boy was actually the son of a merchant and had been educated at University College, London, and at two continental *lycées*, then, surely, it was for the worthy purpose of encouraging the young and ambitious who lacked those advantages.

But Fleet Street's distinguished recruit had known adver-

sity more painful than the menial tasks of a ship's boy. According to Lord Birkenhead's sketch of him,<sup>1</sup> Rufus Isaacs, "through no fault of his own, failed and was 'hammered' upon the Stock Exchange for a large amount while still a very young man." From that unhappy situation, "inexperienced, penniless, almost friendless," he had struggled to qualify for the Bar, and, once called, he worked with such assiduity and skill in his new profession, and with such determination to rehabilitate himself, that within five years he was able to pay off every penny of his Stock Exchange liabilities.

Nevertheless, Fleet Street remembered Lord Reading best as an eloquent advocate, as leader in many a *cause célèbre* that had provided columns of profitable copy, and as a law officer, statesman, judge and pro-consul. Service, first as Solicitor-General and then Attorney-General (with the unprecedented privilege of a seat in the Cabinet), for no more than three years was sufficient to carry him to the exalted post of Lord Chief Justice of England, to which he was appointed in 1913. But seemingly, so rare were his gifts that the State could not leave him to concentrate upon the vital work of his high office. In 1915 he was temporarily relieved of his judicial duties to become President of the Anglo-French Loan Mission to the United States. Later he executed other important duties in Washington, and we have the assurance of Mr. Lloyd George that his presence in the United States was attended by "a further marked improvement in Anglo-American financial relations." As to what share, if any, Lord Reading had in the arrangement of the loans which constitute the Anglo-American War Debt, now supposed by the ignorant to be peculiarly Mr. Baldwin's responsibility, it would not be pertinent here to inquire. Sufficient to record that in 1918 he became Minister Plenipotentiary in Washington.

Ultimately he returned to the bench until, in 1921, the Government under Mr. Lloyd George's leadership deemed

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Personalities*, by the first Earl of Birkenhead.

him essential to India, and he accepted the vast responsibilities of the Governor-Generalship.

From that magnificent post, having committed its manifold problems to Lord Irwin, he returned in 1926, and if there was curiosity concerning the quarter in which his diversified gifts would find expression, it was soon satisfied by the announcement that the new Marquis (the dignities of Viscount and Earldom had been conferred upon him in quick succession during the war) had joined the boards of a bank, an insurance company, an electrical undertaking, and of the vast Imperial Chemical Industries combine.

Then Lord Reading entered Fleet Street, the most exalted personality ever to be associated with the newspaper industry.

Perhaps, too, he was the most awe-inspiring. To be sure, men still spoke with reverence of Northcliffe, but Northcliffe had grown up in the alleys of Fleet Street, and he was a journalist, whereas the newcomer had arrived from the Throne Room of Delhi, to say nothing of the Cabinet chamber and the austere dignity of the Lord Chief Justice's court, where even editors had sometimes sat uneasily on the penitents' bench, while highly paid counsel apologized fully and unreservedly on their behalf.

The staff of the *Daily Chronicle* became conscious of a superior feeling; still more so, perhaps, the staff of the *Sunday News*. What newspaper could boast a Marquis for chairman, and a Marquis who could command three million pounds? From three million pounds to three million copies would surely be an easy transition for so powerful a magnate!

Fleet Street hastened to do homage to the new-comer. The Press Club was thronged for the dinner of welcome. Lord Burnham presided, and Lord Riddell and Major J. J. Astor came to greet the new colleague. Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld and Mr. E. A. Perris represented editorship, and the company was large enough and varied enough to speak for every grade and every branch of journalism.

The occasion was not so glamorous as some by which the

great man had been welcomed in his State excursions east and west ; but it did not lack cordiality or even, the critical might murmur, adulation. Nothing could surpass Lord Burnham's description of the guest as " one of the best-loved and most distinguished of living Englishmen."

A graceful reply, correct throughout, terminated in a peroration in which the Marquis observed :

" In spite of the fact (and indeed perhaps because of it) that newspapers exist as a commercial proposition, they have, nevertheless, great burdens to carry, and a responsibility not only of giving the news, but of informing public opinion. I believe, in truth, that the higher the attitude taken by the Press, the higher status it may evolve as it proceeds—as it does from day to day and strength to strength—so will it become more powerful in informing and influencing opinion, in the impressions that it will create upon the public, in the influence that it will have upon the affairs of the country, and in the authority with which it will help to mould the destinies of the Empire."

With these profound thoughts and noble ideals to sustain them, the company dispersed, feeling no doubt that there had entered the newspaper industry an influence destined to have far-reaching effects. But though Fleet Street watched the *Daily Chronicle* in a spirit of high expectation, nothing notable seemed to occur. The only surprise which it provided occurred in July, 1928, about eighteen months after the entry of the versatile Marquis, when news came that the *Daily Chronicle* and its allied properties had been sold to Mr. William Harrison acting on behalf of what was known as the Inveresk combine. So far as the *Daily Chronicle* and its Sunday paper were concerned, the price was variously stated at the time as ranging from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000.

Thus closed the Reading regime, leaving Fleet Street a trifle dazed. True, Sir David Yule had died recently, but he

was an elderly man at the time of the purchase by Lord Reading, and it seemed strange that such a contingency had not been contemplated and provided for in a transaction of such magnitude. To submit an enterprise that was something more than a "commercial proposition" to two upheavals in two years did not seem consistent with the conception of the Press expressed in Lord Reading's speech; and the *Newspaper World* voiced the opinion of journalists when it protested against papers of this character being "bought and sold as if they were a pound or two of butter."

There was no ceremonial farewell to the Marquis. He faded out of Fleet Street without a valedictory word, and if, watching Lord Reading's departure, an impious journalist echoed the remark of Hans Andersen's small boy concerning the nudity of the emperor, it could only be because he lacked knowledge of the Marquis's past, and could not foresee the future that awaited him.

For Lord Reading, destiny had in store, even for his seventy-first year, the Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs in the first National Government, and though that Government was short-lived and his tenure was brief, there was still to come to him the ancient office of Admiral of the Cinque Ports, with the desirable tenancy of Walmer Castle, and a salute of nineteen guns to greet him on his official visits to the King's garrisons.

His successor, Mr. William Harrison, whose name is associated with the final phase of the history of the *Daily Chronicle*, had risen from obscurity to prominence in four years. He was a solicitor by profession, practising first in Yorkshire and later in the City of London. In 1924 he came into the news by obtaining control of the Inveresk Paper Company, a concern with a capital of over £2,000,000. Scarcely pausing after that immense stride, Mr. Harrison pushed forward into the adjoining sphere of periodical publications, acquiring from Sir John Ellerman a large group of well-established periodicals, including the *Tatler*, the

*Sketch*, and the *Bystander*. This deal was estimated to involve £3,000,000. After an interval of about two years, in the course of which he acquired interests in some provincial newspapers, he entered Fleet Street proper by purchasing the *Daily Chronicle* and its allied journals. Such was the man to whose hands the Marquis of Reading passed the *Daily Chronicle*.

The series of changes of ownership which the properties had undergone in three years had, inevitably, an unsettling influence upon the papers. The political policy of the papers remained unchanged (there was always a Liberal politician on the board), but it must be remembered that, at this period, the fortunes of the Liberal Party, or parties, were ebbing, and this factor added to the difficulties facing the proprietors and the staff of the *Daily Chronicle*. The general election of 1929 dissipated any hope of a Liberal revival in the near future, for out of a total of 512 candidates, only 58 were returned. It was evident that this result and the return of a Labour Government, would accelerate the drift into the Labour ranks of a section of the Liberal Party which had long provided large numbers of readers for the *Daily Chronicle*.

Another menace to the *Daily Chronicle* was provided by the resurgence of the *Daily Herald*. So far, that newspaper had not been seriously regarded as a competitor by any of the London daily newspapers. It was a large-sized Socialist pamphlet rather than a newspaper. After the establishment of the Labour Government of 1929 an arrangement was made between the Socialist controllers of the *Daily Herald* and the powerful newspaper house of Odhams Limited whereby the Labour newspaper should be produced under conditions more favourable to its progress. Fleet Street realized that the resources of money and experience at the command of the Odhams combine would make the *Daily Herald*, for the first time, a powerful competitor. And the *Daily Chronicle*, more perhaps than any other newspaper, would feel the presence of the new rival.

Plans were made by the directors of the *Daily Chronicle* to

meet the assault ; considerable sums were spent on making good the effects of past economies and in introducing new attractions. The *Daily Chronicle* turned out to meet the new *Daily Herald* was a better pennyworth than its readers had seen for some time.

But, in the interim, the preliminary gale that announced the approach of the economic blizzard, had swept through the City of London, bringing down some top-heavy structures and shaking others. Investors ran for cover, and it was no longer possible to launch new issues with the assurance that the lists would be closed ten minutes after opening. If, when he purchased the *Chronicle* properties, Mr. Harrison had formulated plans for raising new capital by a public issue, it was no longer possible to put those plans into operation. Early in 1930 Mr. Harrison told Inveresk shareholders<sup>1</sup> that in 1929 the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Sunday News* made only £25,000 profit, "and I think that the new editions of the *Chronicle* and *Sunday News* cannot be expected to make anything but losses for the next two years."

United Newspapers (1918), Ltd., was controlled by the Daily Chronicle Investment Trust, which in turn was controlled by the Inveresk Paper Co., Ltd., over whose board a representative of one of the great banks now presided, in place of Mr. Harrison. The same gentleman had also succeeded Mr. Harrison in the chair of United Newspapers, Ltd., which had now nine directors. In Donald's day it had four.

The profits of the United Newspapers Company and the Daily Chronicle Investment Trust for the last five years of the existence of the *Daily Chronicle*, are interesting. As given in the Newspaper Finance Annual for 1930 they were :

|  | 1925 | 1926 | 1927 | 1928 | 1929 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| United Newspapers<br>(1918) Ltd. . . . .                               | 12½% | 5%   | 30%  | 30%  | NIL  |
| Daily Chronicle Invest-<br>ment Corporation<br>(Registered July, 1927) | —    | —    | —    | NIL  | 5%   |

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, June 2nd, 1930.

The whole story of the financing of the papers from 1918 to 1930 would, no doubt, yield interesting material to those who have the gift of following the intricacies of company finance and the reaction of capital operations upon the market value of shares. This narrative, however, cannot embrace such an examination. The human side of the tragedy of the *Daily Chronicle* is the more relevant to its purpose, for that was the aspect of the subject which interested Robert Donald.

The staff, of course, were aware of what was happening to the financial structure of the papers. Many of them were shareholders, though it does not follow that they appreciated the full significance of the events of the winter of 1929-1930 or the fall in value of the shares which they held.

Their faith in the stability of the papers was unshaken, even when newspaper shares toppled from the high levels to which they had soared during 1928, and when critical comments were published in rival newspapers concerning Mr. Harrison's enterprises. The worst that they anticipated was another change of ownership, and having had three such upheavals in twelve years they were becoming inured to such vicissitudes.

The papers went their way as they had done for over half a century. There was no sign of alarm or despondency among the staff, whatever might be the emotions in the board-room.

Late in May, 1930, rumours were current concerning the future of the *Daily Chronicle*, and on the last days of that month disquieting hints began to appear in rival journals. Counter-statements were issued, and the staff were reassured. But even while newly installed machines were turning out with miraculous speed and efficiency what were destined to be the last few issues of this great newspaper, there were two or three persons in the office who were aware that the grave of the *Daily Chronicle* was being dug. These individuals were, however, pledged to secrecy, and they were obliged to carry out their duties as usual, listening to suggestions that



would never be carried into effect, discussing dates for holidays with men who were to have a much longer holiday than they had ever experienced. Such painful, if necessary, deceit was not practised for long. The *coup de grâce* was administered swiftly.

On Sunday, June 1st, the staff attended as usual, and the reporters, sub-editors, printers, and messengers went through the familiar routine while the single bell of the adjacent church of St. Bride's summoned the caretakers of Fleet Street to evensong. Though the hundreds of men within the office knew nothing of it, the monody from the steeple of St. Bride's was the passing bell of the *Daily Chronicle*. The stories which the reporters were writing would never be put into type. The news which the tape machines were chattering out would be printed elsewhere, but not in the *Daily Chronicle*. The sub-editors who were searching the early news for indications of what might be the principal story of to-morrow's papers did not guess that the chief feature would be the obituary notice of the *Daily Chronicle*.

What happened is thus described by a member of the staff who was on duty that fateful evening :

“ An editorial messenger entered with a request for all to go at once to the editor's room. Mr. Perris, pale, impassive, had well rehearsed his part, and was word-perfect to deliver his brief lines. What he had to say, he told us, would not take long. It was that the *Daily Chronicle* now in course of preparation would not appear ; copy would be transferred to another office, and there dealt with. It had been made clear recently to the directors, he said, that we could not go on in our present form any longer. An offer had been made and accepted from our contemporary, the *Daily News*. By to-morrow morning a new construction of ownership would be completed, having as its leading organ a journal called the *News-Chronicle*, There was a pause. It seemed to

be intimated that the proprietors of the *Daily News* would be willing to consider the application by *Daily Chronicle* men for vacancies that might be on the new paper. . . . But was that all ? ' Yes, gentlemen, that is all, thank you.' . . . The door opened, the actors filed out, and the curtain came down, this time not to rise again.

" But it was far from all ; the worst was yet to be. Men went back and looked towards the emptied desks with dismay, some staggered their way into corridor or lobby and talked of going home as something to be feared. Blanched faces, nervous hands ; what *does* it mean ?

" It was the thing come true that Philip Gibbs had described in his *Street of Adventure*, but a million times more horrible and real than the event on which he had built. Here were men of fine capabilities, good fellows of long experience, thrown out ; they knew it, and the knowledge was bitter. Several were in their fifties and sixties, and a faithful servitude was being rewarded with the scrap-heap. Some went round to make terms with the new enterprise, but the majority were left out, and many to this day are out still. . . . Those present on this lamentable occasion can never let it pass out of memory. It was as foul a page as the history of Fleet Street can produce."

But rarely to Englishmen can events be so overwhelming as to extinguish every spark of humour. The gay courage that can fling a jest in the face of disaster expressed itself in a corridor in that office of gloom. A few members of the staff, strolling aimlessly and dejectedly about the premises some time after the news had been announced, encountered an old servitor, Tom Cutler. Tom's place on the staff was a modest one : he was the person to whom men of greater gifts would appeal to repair a fused light or to cure a smoking chimney. But he was " one of the family." He had spent his lifetime

in the *Chronicle* office, one of many who still thought of Edward Lloyd as "the boss" and of his son as "Mr. Frank," though both were dead and gone.<sup>1</sup>

To Tom Cutler was put the question which everyone asked of his neighbour that night—"What do you think of it?"

"Well," replied Tom, with the air of one who had a special grievance of his own, "if anyone had told me when I came here fifty years ago that this wasn't likely to be a permanent job, I'd never have taken it on."

Half a century's service in the one house was not the longest record among the men who that night were consigned sorrowfully but certainly to the "scrap-heap." One of the editorial messengers had entered the service of the Lloyds sixty years previously and had continued on the staff of their successors without a break. There were many men with forty years' service, and thirty years was not a record of great account.

It was for the staff that Robert Donald was most concerned when he heard the news. There had been relatively few changes since he left them, and he realized how cruel was the blow that had fallen upon many whom he still regarded as old friends.

"The passing of the *Daily Chronicle*," he said in an interview published in the *Daily Mail*, "is the greatest tragedy which has happened in the chequered story of Fleet Street. Never has there been a case of a newspaper going out of existence by absorption, or otherwise, having a sale of about a million. It shows what this terrific pressure of competition in the modern newspaper field has become.

"One's first thought at this journalistic calamity, which came with such dramatic suddenness, must be for the staff, over a thousand strong, who will be thrown out of work. The paper had, all round, a very capable staff, and there are few new openings in journalism to-day.

<sup>1</sup> Frank Lloyd died in 1927.

"I consider that in recent years the *Daily Chronicle* has been struggling under handicaps which a competent staff could not overcome. The first blow to its prestige was when it became the organ of Mr. Lloyd George. This meant that its political news had to be shaped to suit his policy—in other words, that its political reports lacked the true perspective—and that its independence in opinion was sacrificed.

"Then it lost its distinctive character through the disappearance or change of certain features. Juggling with the 'make-up' was also another mistake—taking the news off the front page and putting it back again, changing the size of the page, etc.

"Then, it seemed to me in recent years, it had been striving to imitate other papers instead of being itself and developing its own characteristics.

"Lack of continuity in managerial direction was also a weakness. I believe there have been seven or eight different chairmen and managing directors in ten years. A newspaper cannot be run successfully by a board of directors—the chief of whom are not experts—and a series of committees."

Of the possible causes of the disaster he said but little more in an article which he was asked to write for the *Newspaper World*. Though he praised the craftsmanship which the paper displayed to the end, he regretted some of the changes. He instanced the reduction of foreign news. The politician and the financier, he said, did not think much of foreign news, which was risky as well as costly, but it gave authority to a paper and "no first-class journal is complete without a world service of its own. But non-journalists would not see any dividends in it."

"Immense sums," he wrote, "have been taken out of the *Daily Chronicle*, not in dividends, but in deals, sales and re-sales, compensations and fees. Under this financial policy no

adequate provision was made for building up reserves, for retirement allowances, for reconstruction, for meeting fiercer competition. The failure of the *Daily Chronicle* is not attributable to the staff, although among them are the chief victims of that calamity. . . . There seems to me to be a moral responsibility lying upon somebody—I don't know whom—for allowing so many old and loyal servants to be stranded in the twilight of their lives."

About 30 per cent of the editorial staff were absorbed by the *News Chronicle*, but that degree of relief was afforded only by displacing a certain number of men from the staff of the *Daily News*. In this painful adjustment the spirit of the journalistic profession was seen at its best. Men who were unmarried, or who had some subsidiary source of income, refused to be considered for absorption by the *Daily News* in order that colleagues whose need of employment was more urgent might have a better chance. Some *Daily News* men resigned voluntarily so that more *Daily Chronicle* men might be absorbed. In short, men who could swim for their own lives gave their places in the boats to those who had dependants to keep afloat.

"I had seen in him, in that strange alloy which we call human nature, a vein of purest gold." That tribute was paid by Mr. Baldwin to Curzon of Kedleston, but the words were equally true of many a humbler man in Fleet Street during that black week of 1930.

But, as was feared, the end of the *Daily Chronicle* meant for many the end of permanent employment. Some were too old to be re-engaged, and their ability to withstand the consequent hardships and anxieties was reduced, particularly among the mechanical staff, by loss of the savings they had invested in the company.

Donald did his best to help. Nothing pleased him more in his last years than to be able to "place" an old colleague of the *Daily Chronicle*, or to receive news that one of them had found a niche in a structure in which niches were becoming

increasingly rare. There is little doubt, too, that he assisted by commissioning an old friend now and then to do work for him which, at best, had only a prospective value.

About a year after the disappearance of the *Daily Chronicle* the ranks of the displaced journalists were reinforced by the cessation of the *Sunday News*. After the merging of the daily paper, the *Sunday News* maintained an independent existence and seemed likely to survive. But only a few months before the major disaster, the character of the paper had been entirely changed. It had entered the picture paper field, and it had to win its place among powerful and well-established competitors. In that it showed signs of succeeding, until the economic upheaval of the summer of 1931 made the effort vain.

Thus in 1931 disappeared the last trace of two famous newspapers which, conducted primarily as newspapers, had become national institutions and sources of prosperity to their proprietors and staffs ; but which, losing their independence and becoming "commercial propositions," crashed in ruins, pinning beneath the debris those innocent of responsibility.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CLOSING YEARS

ONE day early in the nineteen-thirties Robert Donald was talking politics with a friend.<sup>1</sup> They were discussing particularly the obsolescence of the old party lines of demarcation, and Donald said :

“If you asked me what I am politically, I should find it very difficult to answer. Perhaps I should describe myself as a ‘social democrat.’”

Donald had never been a party zealot, even in the days of his editorship of the *Daily Chronicle*. In selecting men for his staff, the man’s fitness for the post was the paramount consideration. If the work were not intimately connected with the political policy of the paper, the candidate’s political views were of small importance to the editor.

“Don’t tell me if you’d rather not,” was his reassuring remark to one young journalist whom he was about to engage, and who had hesitated to answer Donald’s casual question about his political convictions. “We’re a Liberal paper, but,” added the editor with a whimsical smile, “most of the staff seem to be Tories or Socialists.”

In times when the political loyalties of newspapers were more rigid than they are to-day, it was not uncommon to find that the private views of the members of the staff did not always coincide with the opinions expressed in the leading articles. One accepted explanation of this divergence is that the members of the staff of a paper, in the course of their

<sup>1</sup> Mr. B. B. Chapman, once his personal assistant, and for long afterwards a confidant,

duties, were privileged to see something of the workings of the machinery of the party to which their journal was allied. Such experiences did not always enhance their respect for the party. It is said that the workers in chocolate factories are not particularly fond of chocolates, and for the same reason it was often found that a journalist, serving a newspaper of pronounced political views, was not the most ardent admirer of the party whose cause his journal espoused.

Some such process of disillusionment had been actively at work in Donald's mind for many years. The war accelerated it. He had always been in close touch with Labour, and, during the war, the bridging of the gulf between the Liberals and the Conservatives enabled him to reach the Tory camp and to fraternize with leaders there.

Of the four post-war Prime Ministers, Donald could claim to have known three intimately—Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Nor were his friendships with other Ministers less catholic.

Contacts so varied played their part in bringing Donald to the state of mind in which he found it impossible to accept the "ticket" of any party. He was for peace, for democratic government, for social progress and imperial development; and he was prepared to support any movement to advance those causes, from whatever party it might issue.

Consequently, when in 1931 the emergency Government decided to seek the country's approval for a policy of sustained party co-operation in a National Government, Donald found, at last, a political banner under which he could enlist and a political ideal which had long been in his own mind.

The new Government included several Liberal friends, notably Sir John Simon, Mr. Runciman, and Sir Donald Maclean; but it was towards the Labour wing that Donald was drawn. Possibly this preference for the Labour section is explained by the fact that, of recent years, his sympathies had been tending more and more to the left, but one must



allow for his long friendship with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and the fact that the small Labour group was most in need of the assistance which Donald could render.

The Prime Minister invited him to take the post of chairman of the publicity committee of the National Labour Party. Deprived of the powerful support of the party machine to which they had been accustomed, the Labour candidates who had remained loyal to Mr. MacDonald were at a disadvantage which could be mitigated only by great industry and resource on the part of those who undertook to provide an organization to help them. Of Donald's part in that work the Prime Minister paid tribute in a letter sent three days after the poll. "You know even better than I do," wrote Mr. MacDonald, "what the difficulties were with which our hurriedly improvised organization had to contend, and I simply do not know how they would have been surmounted without your experience and whole-hearted help."

During the election campaign Donald had seen not only the immediate difficulties but also the larger problems of propaganda which would confront the new party in the future. Although the Labour Party would oppose the new Government on every section of the allied line, on the small and hastily entrenched company of National Labour men its fire would be concentrated and incessant.

The need for propaganda work was urgent. The friendly aid of Conservative and Liberal newspapers was not enough, and would be misrepresented. Small as it was, the party needed a Press of its own. The difficulties of acquiring one were immense, but a beginning should be made. Thus came the *News-Letter*, the fortnightly organ of the National Labour Party, a useful publication but one with obvious limitations.

Something with a wider appeal was needed, and presently Donald heard that an old-established weekly periodical, which could be readily adapted to the needs of the party, might be acquired.

The paper was *Everyman*, a periodical which for many years had been stimulating popular interest in books and in intellectual pursuits generally. The appeal of such a paper might be extended and its scope enlarged so as to attract the large public who were interested in the new ideal of broad-based government.

In the summer of 1932 *Everyman* was secured, and Donald became the Chairman and Managing Director of the new proprietorial company. Pursuing a policy of gradual but not slothful change, Donald proceeded to apply the paper to its new purpose. In a few months, with his old skill and judgment, he had attracted to the paper a band of gifted writers to reinforce the established favourites of the old clientele of *Everyman*. Some were men and women who had proved their worth through the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*; others were writers of more recent achievement whose work had interested him.

Donald himself gave much of his time to maintaining liaison between the paper and the principal personalities of the Government, particularly those of the Labour wing. He contributed many of the topical notes, giving the paper a new status as a medium of political news and comment, a status quickly recognized by the daily Press, which began to quote *Everyman* on current political questions.

He contributed articles also, the most notable being a criticism of the report of the Bridgeman Committee on the Post Office; in which once again he stressed the need for more enterprising management.

Such discussions, however, were incidental to the work with which Donald was principally concerned, namely; the task of educating the public in the achievements and the potentialities of the National Government. And he pursued his purpose through media other than *Everyman*. A letter from the Prime Minister thanking Donald for his booklets on Town Planning indicates one of the many channels of propaganda he was opening to the Government.

Mr. J. L. Garvin has written that Donald never did finer work for the country than in his editorship of *Everyman*. If the statement seems extravagant it is perhaps because that work was terminated in its earliest stages. Donald had been engaged upon it barely six months when death arrested his industrious pen and his restless, resourceful, and undaunted mind. But Mr. Garvin had perceived the quality of that work, and knew how sorely the country needed the guidance "strong and calm, deep-hearted and wide-hearted" which Donald was capable of giving and was eager to give so long as his strength permitted.

On the whole, his health was good, but as he neared the seventies the strain of a busy life began to tell. At the end of 1932 he was threatened with a break-down, but rest and the air of Devonshire seemed to restore him. Even while he was still supposed to be resting, he contributed a long letter to *The Times*, urging that Government support and protection be given to a scheme for the production of petrol from coal on a commercial scale, by the process known as hydrogenation. Seven months later the Government adopted proposals substantially identical with those Donald had made.

Early in 1934 he returned to London and his multitudinous activities, and though obviously not robust, he went through his usual routine, even to attendance at public luncheons and dinners.

On the morning of February 17th, in his flat overlooking Kensington Gardens, as he was occupied in what was always one of the most enjoyable duties of the day—scanning the principal morning newspapers—he had a seizure. The end came swiftly. But in the brief interval between the onset of the attack and its fatal climax, his mind was fixed upon the affairs of the day, and, as he lay upon a couch, with the morning papers scattered beside him on the carpet, he asked Lady Donald to telephone to Downing Street and arrange for the postponement of an appointment he had with the Prime Minister on that day.

Instead of their meeting in the following week, the Prime Minister came to Fleet Street to mourn the passing of his old friend, at the customary service at St. Bride's, where gathered a congregation of newspaper proprietors and politicians and journalists of every type.

Because Donald was a journalist, it was natural, perhaps, that, in the obituary notices, references to his professional distinction and his services to journalism should overshadow the record of his service to the public. His editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* was the subject of many tributes. "He gave a vital character to his own newspaper," said the *Daily Express*. "When he left it, the spark died out of it, and nobody in the new generation ever rekindled it."

Elsewhere, notably in *Everyman*, friends tried to define the character which imparted that vital spark. Mr. R. D. Blumensfeld wrote of Donald's life as being "as simple, as blameless, and as uncomplaining as a child's," and extolled his "fine regard for the ethics of his profession." Mr. J. L. Garvin found him "big in heart, and strong in grip," a man who saw life "largely, equitably, kindly."

Mr. R. C. K. Ensor, who, as the *Chronicle's* principal leader writer for several years, spent many an hour in discussing with Donald public affairs and public men, wrote of "the penetrating (though kindly) shrewdness with which he appraised personalities in the field of politics," and of his "unquenchable public spirit." Another former *Chronicle* colleague, Mr. James Milne, recalled him as "a tireless spirit, loving his paper, and driving it in the service of high yet practical ideals."

To those who knew the two men who were most closely allied in the hey-day of the *Daily Chronicle*, there was a special interest in the picture sketched in a few telling phrases by Mr. E. A. Perris who succeeded Donald in the editorial chair: "He was a just man, a considerate man, and a born leader," wrote Perris. "I never knew him weaken in his principle or fail those who worked for him and loved him. He retained

his courage in troublous times and has left behind tender memories and splendid examples."

If an epitaph be sought for Robert Donald it is to be found in a line which Mr. Rudyard Kipling wrote for inscription upon a memorial<sup>1</sup> to the journalists of the Empire who fell in the Great War :

"We have served our day."

Nor need it be transposed into the first person singular to make it appropriate, for Donald never failed to recognize that every journalist, however conspicuous his abilities, can succeed in his mission only by the co-operation of his fellow-craftsmen. In life he never failed to acknowledge that debt ; in death he would have wished it to be recorded.

To serve the day is not to pander to the passing whims and prejudices of the public, to debased appetites and mob emotions, though too often journalism amounts to no more than that. Journalism is a service only when, behind the process of recording ephemeral things, and behind the meretricious devices that are employed to arrest attention and to coax the tired or lazy eye, there are minds anchored to sound principles and resolved to employ the power of the Press to worthy ends. To be of the public, understanding its every mood, anticipating its demands, and yet to be its mentor, is no easy role to play, but that is the part allotted to the journalist, particularly the journalist engaged upon the daily Press.

Robert Donald succeeded in that mission because he was, at heart, a servant and not a careerist. "Such varied ability as he possessed," wrote Lord Marshall of Chipstead, "would have carried a self-seeking man much further than Robert Donald travelled on the road to fame ; but his public record shows a consistent refusal to seize the main chance for his own advancement, and those of us in the inner circle of his friends

<sup>1</sup> In the hall of the Institute of Journalists.

have known that in allowing opportunities to pass he did so of set purpose, guided by his rule of life, and expressing his real self."

It was because of this indifference to his own material interests that he bore himself always with such serenity. Rarely did the mean little tricks of mean little men succeed in ruffling him. He could take even an unfair blow and count it unworthy of so much as a protest. Bitterness found no lodging in his character. He retained his faith in his fellows, thinking the best of a man until the worst was evident, and even then, to quote Lady Donald, "he would not be anything but forgiving and gentle." His attitude toward others erred on the side of generosity. In many instances he was too confiding, and suffered as a consequence.

In an intensely competitive sphere like metropolitan journalism, which attracts an abnormal proportion of those individuals who are determined to succeed by no matter what means, a man of Donald's temperament is certain to encounter experiences calculated to breed suspicion, distrust, and even a bitter cynicism. But it is not the least remarkable feature of Robert Donald's life that such experiences had little effect upon him. He regarded them as inherent in the occupation in which he was engaged, as a kind of scum which a man should not allow to sour the genial current of his soul. Thus immunized against the worst that Fleet Street could do, the comparable effluents of the political world could not divert or repel him.

To suggest that Robert Donald was devoid of the weaknesses to which ordinary humanity is prone, would be absurd. It would be idle to pretend that there were no actions he regretted, no articles he wished he had not written, no enterprises or associations which, on reflection, he wished he had avoided. But in relation to the amount of activity which he crowded into his days, such lapses from the high standards which his life reveal were few, and did nothing to impair the regard in which he was held.

The journalist who serves his day is, in relation to history, like the zoophyte who adds his tiny being to the coral reef. His work is of the day, and however important it may seem at noon, it is of small account after sunset. Whether any larger measure of survival is permitted to him depends upon whether he has surrendered himself utterly to ephemeral things, or whether, in spite of being a journalist, he has remained a man.

## APPENDIX

*Three Addresses on Journalism delivered by Sir Robert Donald.  
(Slightly abridged.)*

### NEW FORCES IN JOURNALISM

*Address by Robert Donald, President of the Institute of Journalists,  
Annual Conference, York, August 18th, 1913.*

**A**FTER touching upon matters of domestic interest, Mr. Donald said :  
Your President of twenty years ago, Dr. Charles Russell, a most distinguished journalist and editor, delivered an able and far-seeing address. He described the changes through which journalism was then passing, and foreshadowed developments which were to come. He warned the Institute to be prepared for the future, and to keep pace with the tendencies of the time.

"As an Institute of Journalists," he said, "we are bound to provide for the future so far as we can, and to observe tendencies which may be indicative of great changes to come. Moreover, we must consider the possible effects which the development of social and intellectual movements and political and other institutions may have upon the Press."

He observed tendencies indicative of great changes to come, and foreshadowed them with remarkable accuracy. He suggested that

"the newspaper will more and more become the daily magazine in which all news capable of such treatment will be presented in a brighter and more attractive form, and in which many subjects of public interest formerly never touched will engage the attention of the more capable journalists. In other words, the level of newspaper work as a whole will be raised, and that, of course, implies that the culture of journalists must be raised to satisfy the new conditions."

I think you will admit that Dr. Russell, one of the high priests of journalism, has earned a place among the prophets. Some unforeseen



developments have taken place in the production of newspapers as a business, and have affected the interests of journalism in a way which he did not contemplate.

One outstanding effect of the changes which have taken place in the newspaper world during the last twenty years is that there has been a check in the increase of newspapers. During twenty years the total number of newspapers, morning, evening, and weekly, in England has only increased a little more than 6 per cent, while the population during that period has increased 24 per cent, and the growth to the reading public by a great deal more. In the chief centres of population there are fewer morning and evening newspapers than there were twenty years ago. Figures do not convey an adequate idea of the upheaval which has taken place in the Press world. During this period some papers have attained colossal circulations, and enjoyed unexampled prosperity, while others of great reputation have disappeared, or are in a state of senile decay, leading a precarious existence which may come to an end any day. The existing papers are in the hands of fewer ownerships.

Another far-reaching change, and one which is partly responsible for the revolution which has taken place, is that the Press has become commercialized. The proprietorial system has almost disappeared. Instead of individual ownership we have corporations, public or private. Nine-tenths of the leading daily and evening newspapers belong to limited companies—corporations with “neither bodies to be kicked nor souls to be damned.” Twenty years ago the list of the London Stock Exchange did not contain a single newspaper corporation. Now twelve large companies representing many millions of capital, figure in the quotations. Many other companies are dealt with publicly in a more restricted market. Stock Exchange annuals contain a list of twenty-six newspaper limited liability companies, all of which, except one, have been registered during the last twenty years. These do not include firms who are primarily printers and book publishers. Nor do they by any means represent all the conversions from individual ownership to companies. The majority of the remaining newspaper properties are held by private limited companies controlled by Boards of Directors, and these will, in process of time, by the forces of self-interest and new legislation, be thrown on the public market. All this means, as I have said, that the Press, like other departments of industry, has entered into the region of corporate ownership. When I say that the Press has now become commercialized, I do not wish it to be inferred that personal ownership was a combination of paternalism and philanthropy. The private owner was a business man who liked his profit and made it, but

as he had no responsibility towards shareholders, preferred less profit to compromise with principle. Under corporate ownership the main concern of shareholders, who are investors and not journalists, is their dividends, and dividends must be earned even if principle has to suffer in the process. Along with the growth of the corporate-owned Press has come as an inevitable part of the movement, multiple ownership. Combination has been the chief characteristic of Industry all over the world, and the Press could not remain outside this tendency. One company sometimes owns or controls a series of newspapers. There have been absorptions, amalgamations, alliances, with the result that vast aggregations of capital have been built up in which thousands of shareholders are interested. These agglomerations, piling up power and wealth, are controlled by the same forces which operate in other fields of industrial activity.

The coming of the corporation, and the nationalization of newspapers, place enormous power to sway public opinion in the hands of a few people. They can influence opinion by what is published, and mislead it by what is omitted. Greater power over the public mind should always be accompanied by a greater sense of responsibility.

The concentration of ownership is obviously not in the interest of the journeyman journalist. Salaries are better, but the field is narrowed because employers are fewer. There are more opportunities to become heads of departments, but fewer chances of becoming chief. There is less security of tenure, more changes, greater difficulty, when once out, of getting back. The call is for new blood. Failing to find a place in the profession which they love, some of the men displaced drift into Press work in connection with business undertakings. At the same time there are, as I have said, more opportunities for heads of departments—for a place in the editorial hierarchy. There is demand for journalists of administrative capacity and men of creative ability.

Besides opening the door for more rapid promotion, the corporation has given the successful journalists an opportunity of becoming shareholders, thus enabling them to reap a small part the harvest of dividends which their energies help to produce.

In a material sense, therefore, the position of the journalist has improved. The quality of the work is also better. We are dealing with a much more highly educated reading-public—a public impatient of dullness, and critical, and also with many readers who insist on being entertained rather than instructed. There is a greater demand for original writing. The modern reporter must be more of a writer than a recorder. Work is much more strenuous ; the pressure and the strain

are greater, as the time during which reports have to be written and sub-edited is shortened. More work has to be done in less time. Rates of pay for contributions have increased, as well as salaries. There are more brilliant writers contributing to the Press to-day than at any time in its history—more thought is spent upon the contents of the paper, more effort is made to make papers attractive.

As Dr. Russell foreshadowed, papers have become more like daily magazines, bright and attractive. The popular journals feel it necessary to introduce new features of the magazine kind to compete with the prodigious output of the weekly variety Press, made up of snippety bits, fiction, general articles, and competitions. Twenty or more years ago the majority of the articles in newspapers were written by members of the staff or by attached contributors; now the contributors outnumber the staff. Work has become more highly specialized, and the number of people who can write well has increased, but are an insignificant few compared with those who think they can write better. These contributors are not, strictly speaking, journalists; they are authors, professors, teachers, politicians, men and women of leisure, specialists who can write in a popular style. The reporter or sub-editor has an equal chance with others to become a contributor, and starts with the initial advantage of inside knowledge.

If I were to attempt, like Dr. Russell, to forecast the future, and prophesy what newspapers of twenty or more years hence are likely to be, I would say with some confidence that daily newspapers will be fewer, the tendency towards combinations will increase, and colossal circulations will continue to grow. A paper which has not at least a half-million readers will not be considered seriously as an organ of the people. The weak newspapers which cannot spend huge sums on news, on features, and on circulation, will, of course, be squeezed out, and the paper run as a luxury or for a mission, and not as a business enterprise, will become too expensive except for millionaire idealists. There will, therefore, be fewer newspapers, but the total circulation will be greater. The power of these national journalistic dreadnoughts in moulding and influencing public opinion will not be less, in whatever direction their influence is exercised. Besides the national newspapers, giving an epitome of life, and presenting the human and picturesque side of news collected from all parts of the kingdom and all ends of the earth, there will be localized newspapers which will follow the method of the national Press in presenting news. There will, I hope, be a revival of the purely local country newspapers, much improved in form and style, otherwise public life will suffer a serious loss. The more national newspapers become, the less space will they give to sectional interests,

and we shall have specialized daily newspapers to take the place of the specialized weeklies which now exist.

The national newspapers will not contain less reading matter, but the pages will be smaller. They will be printed better and neatly stitched, and will, of course, include pictures in colour. The future methods of distribution will be quicker, and circulations will cover greater areas. Airships and aeroplanes will be used for the most distant centres; electric trains and motorplanes, running in special tracks, will also be used. In all the chief centres of population papers will be distributed by electric or pneumatic tubes. The morning and evening newspapers will be merged, and editions will come out almost every hour, day and night. News will be collected by wireless telephones and the reporter will always have a portable telephone with him, with which he can communicate with his paper without the trouble of going to a telephone office, or writing out a message. At the other end the wireless telephone message will be delivered to the sub-editor printed in column form.

The chief competition to the national newspapers of the future will not be from other newspapers, but from other methods of disseminating news.

At the people's recreation halls, with the cinematograph and the gramophone, or some more agreeable instrument of mechanical speech, all the news of the day will be given hot from its source. People may become too lazy to read, and news will be laid on to the house or office just as gas and water are now. The occupiers will listen to an account of the news of the day read to them by much improved phonographs while sitting in their gardens, or a householder will have his daily newspaper printed in column form by a printing machine in his hall, just as we have tape machines in offices now.

Judging from the trend of events, the next generation will see the activities of municipal and other public authorities very much extended. Their meetings, including committee meetings, must, of course, be public. Newspapers will not be able to report their proceedings, consequently municipalities will have to issue official gazettes, daily or weekly as the case may be. Government departments have already set an example within the last few years, and Parliament now reports itself and issues daily Parliamentary journals which will, by and by, be published at a halfpenny and placed on the bookstalls.

Newspapers are taking much less notice of speeches in Parliament; and no one can know what the London County Council is doing from the reports in the Press. The one-sided way in which some papers already treat public authorities is another reason for the coming official

gazettes. Clearly every public body must have its own organ. The newspapers will act as watchdogs and critics of their proceedings and as a check to bureaucracy.

One might think that I am overdrawing the possibility of invention and progress. No bounds can be put to progress, and the future is full of great possibilities. Everyone hopes that the next generation will see the millions now wasted on wars and armaments let loose, and part of these colossal sums devoted to the promotion of science, the endowment of research, the spread of education, and the increase of social amenities.

After this flight into the future I will return to earth and practical politics. Our business at this conference is to make the best of things as they are. In view of the changing conditions in newspaper work, the Institute was never more wanted to guard the privileges which it has won, and to advance our professional interests.

We must strengthen and consolidate our forces, strive to raise the standard of our work. Public taste is getting better, there are searchings after a higher culture, and journalism should foster and guide every upward movement, every elevating tendency. We cannot prevent or even check the irresistible trend towards more concentration and keener competition, but we can do our part to maintain the honour, the dignity, and the reputation of the British Press. Capitalists may call the tune, but we are still able to give the tone. Journalists should never forget that the dignity of the most fascinating, the most powerful, and the noblest profession in the world is in their keeping, and that in all their actions and their work they should be worthy of the name : "Gentlemen of the Press."

## THE FUTURE OF THE JOURNALIST

*Address by Robert Donald, President of the Institute of Journalists, to the Glasgow and West of Scotland District of the Institute, December 6th, 1913.*

**D**URING the last twenty years the British Press has undergone many changes, and it is still in a state of transition. Many old journals have been transformed, and have adopted the new methods of their younger rivals ; but some cling to old traditions. It is not my intention, however, to deal with newspapers, but with the men who make them ; with their present status and their future prospects. I would like to address myself to some practical questions affecting the position of the individual journalist, more particularly the members of the rank and file, and with the dignity and standing of our profession.

I consider that our daily newspapers as a whole were never better edited and better written than they are to-day. The journalist of to-day shows more originality and initiative, possesses greater literary ability than his prototype of any generation. The profession has been strengthened by the introduction of fresh talent, generally in the higher grades. More men trained at our Universities are becoming journalists. There is great scope for original writing owing to the demand for special articles on problems of the day or subjects of passing interest, and for articles written for the entertainment rather than the instruction of the reader, and also because of the widened definition of news. The link between literature and journalism was never closer than it is to-day.

The commercial side of newspapers had kept pace with the advance in editorial ability and enterprise, and in many cases has been the stimulating agent in new developments. Specialization has also provided more work for new writers ; variety has been given to the contents of newspapers by the increased attention paid to matters of feminine interest, and by the contributions of women writers, who have discovered in the Press a new outlet for their intellectual energies. All this is to the good of the journalist, the Press, and the country. There

are more big prizes to be won in journalism at the present day, a clearer road for advancement by merit, and higher rewards when success is achieved. At the same time, the growing concentration of ownership and the reduction in the number of newspapers make it much more difficult for men who lose responsible positions in daily journalism to secure other posts.

There is no profession in which there is a greater diversity of pay than in journalism. The organizers and editorial men at the top, in some cases, command salaries equal to those of Cabinet Ministers, while their deputies receive the pay of Under-Secretaries of State ; but the rank and file, and especially the men at the bottom, are no better off than they were twenty years ago. There are many reporters in country districts who do not receive more pay than unskilled labourers.<sup>1</sup> In dealing with this subject I confine myself to newspapers—daily, evening, and weekly—and I exclude London, where the conditions are not comparable with those which exist in other parts of the country. . . .

Reporters and sub-editors are miserably paid in many towns throughout the country. I have been enabled to obtain precise facts which refer to representative towns, but I will not indicate the newspapers or name the towns. I will give the population of the towns approximately, as the size of a town has an important bearing on the cost of living in it. I am dealing with a condition of things, a system for which individuals are not responsible, but it is a state of things which the whole profession of journalism should determine to reform. It is not creditable to journalists or employers that reporters who write the copy should be paid less—as is too often the case—than the compositors who put it into type.

I ought to add that none of the examples which I give refer to newspapers of the first rank.

In a town with a population of 120,000 there are experienced senior reporters who receive less than 30s. a week. Linotype operators working on the same newspapers get 40s., and case hands 32s. Postal telegraphists reach a maximum of 52s., and their average pay is higher than that of the reporters.

Take another town, with a population of 170,000. Here reporters are paid from 25s. to 50s., and sub-editors 50s., and a few rise to the Olympian heights suggested by £3 10s. a week. On a bi-weekly the highest paid reporter gets 30s. a week. In the same town linotype

<sup>1</sup> Conditions have improved substantially since this address was delivered, although they are not yet satisfactory to the professional organizations. The figures given herein may, however, be of interest as a contribution to the history of journalism.

operators' earnings are 40s. 6d., and those of case hands 36s. a week, and expert postal telegraphists are paid 48s. a week.

I have particulars from several towns with populations approaching 100,000 each where some senior reporters get 28s. a week. Linotype operators are comparatively wealthy on 45s. a week, and case hands receive 40s. The pay of postal telegraphists ranges from 47s. to 52s. a week.

In a town in quite another part of England, with a population of more than 200,000, only two out of a staff of six reporters receive more than 30s., compared with linotype operators who are paid 47s., and 42s. paid to case hands. Postal telegraphists are better off than those underpaid reporters to the extent of 20s. a week.

In a seaside town, having more than 100,000 inhabitants, experienced reporters receive from 30s. to 38s. weekly, and sub-editors from 40s. to 55s., and members of the staff are subject to a radius agreement. The linotype operators on the same papers, who are under no such handicap, earn from 34s. to 38s. The pay of postal telegraphists in the town is equal to that of the sub-editors.

In a manufacturing city with a population of about 360,000, reporters are employed on one daily paper at 30s. a week, but linotype operators command 50s. a week. Senior postal telegraphists receive 56s. . . .

These details of low salaries are painfully monotonous. I could add other examples from equally well-authenticated sources, but I have shown that reporting in some places almost comes within the sphere of a sweated industry. I do not overlook the fact that sometimes reporters, less frequently sub-editors, supplement their income by lineage, but lineage is an element which keeps salaries down, while it raises the income of a few. . . .

I would point out that the pay of the compositors mentioned is the minimum, as they are paid for overtime ; so are the telegraphists, who also enjoy pensions, which are in the nature of deferred pay.

It is not very encouraging to have to record that there are plenty of men who are willing and ready to fill the positions I have mentioned, and for less money than present holders receive, as one can see from advertisements of journalists offering their services. A better test, however, is to be found in the applications received for vacancies advertised. I have examined hundreds of such applications which have been passed on to me. They are melancholy reading. They are almost all from men in positions, and they show that journalists of great experience who have occupied responsible positions on daily newspapers are ready to give their services for less than £4 a week.

Some applications point another moral ; they show that the



candidates have begun their journalistic work when they ought to have been still at school. One youthful gentleman of twenty-six claimed to have had nearly fourteen years' experience in journalism. He demanded a salary of £2 10s. a week. A man of nearly twice his age, who had acquired a practical knowledge of printing in London and the provinces, had a long experience in reporting and sub-editing, and was in charge of a paper, offered his services for £3 a week. An applicant for a similar position, involving both reporting and sub-editing work, and in which the selected candidate would have to take charge occasionally, said that he had had ten years' experience, although he was only twenty-seven years of age. He required a salary of 32s. 6d. a week.

A candidate for a position in the provinces had edited and managed local papers, and was at the time of writing the editor of a bi-weekly. He wanted only 35s. a week, although he confessed to forty-one years of age. Two others, aged respectively forty-two and forty-five, asked for a salary of 45s. One had been a senior reporter and advertisement canvasser, while the other undertook to write leading articles, specials, read proofs, and make up a paper. Another applicant who likewise limited his value to 45s. a week had had an all-round experience. His age was thirty-five. A man who had a thorough practical knowledge, and had been a journalist all his working life, aged thirty-four and married, suggested 35s. a week; while another, whose experience of journalism took the form of leader writing and political notes, was aged twenty-three. He wanted 45s., but was obviously prepared to accept 35s. A young man of twenty-five years of age claimed nearly ten years' experience in journalism, could report, sub-edit, write leaders, in fact could do anything in the newspaper line, and was prepared to do it for 47s. a week. Another candidate for a reportorial position had had thirteen years' experience in the editorial, advertisement, and publishing departments of various newspapers, and was twenty-eight years of age. He placed his attainments and his ability at the disposal of the advertiser for a modest 35s. a week.

None of the particulars which I have given refer to reporters or sub-editors on small country or local newspapers, nor, as I have said, to newspapers of the first rank. I have few details of the remuneration in the case of local journals; but it is certainly less than the amounts which I have mentioned. In any cases the duties of reporting or sub-editing are combined with work in the advertisement and publishing departments. . . .

If any further proof were needed to demonstrate that journalists as a class, considering the attainments which they are supposed to possess, and the responsible nature of the work which they have to

perform, are about the worst paid of any professional body of men, it is to be found in the operation of the National Insurance Act. No fewer than 2100 members of the National Union of Journalists, out of a total of 3600, are insured persons, which means that their income is less than £160 a year. The membership of the National Union, great as it is, does not include a majority of the worst paid reporters on the staffs of local newspapers.

There are many causes of underpay and what appears to be the overcrowding of the profession in its lower grades. In the first place, there are many reporters and correspondents connected with local newspapers who should not be in journalism at all. They have succumbed to the glamour of the Press, or have been brought in by the apprenticeship system. We must remember that the average intelligence of the public has improved in recent years. People read more, and members of the artisan class appreciate a well-written paragraph. They know the difference between a well-informed and an ill-informed news article. The style of writing in many local newspapers and in newspapers in the smaller towns has not improved. After all, one cannot expect a finished literary style for 30s. a week.

The persistence of the apprenticeship system is a very harassing factor, particularly in its effect on the lower ranks of journalists on small newspapers. In very few cases is there a hard-and-fast rule as to what proprietors shall teach their apprentices; they consider their obligations fulfilled by sending their young men out on reporting engagements, and giving them proofs to read and correct when they are in the office.

Another cause of low salaries lies in the fact that a large number of local papers find the greatest difficulty nowadays in making ends meet, owing to the increased competition of London and influential provincial journals which come within the category of national newspapers, and in the growth of the evening Press. Properties which have a declining revenue try to economise in all directions. The competition of London and other papers is, however, only indirectly to blame. The primary fault is due to the proprietors themselves, who ignore changing conditions and run their papers on the old conventional lines. . . .

There are many obstacles to professional solidarity inherent in the nature of the journalist's work. Journalism is not a closed profession like medicine, or the law. It is not restricted by examinations, standards or certificates, such as appertain to professional bodies like architects, chemists, or accountants. There are about as many amateurs at work on the Press as a whole as there are professionals. Attempts have been made for many years by the Institute of Journalists, and more recently

and more vigorously by the National Union, to keep off "blackleg" reporters, and with considerable success; but there are other columns in newspapers—more now than formerly—than those occupied with the news of the day. Special articles, expert articles, reviews, dramatic and musical criticism, leading articles, magazine page contributions, special correspondence, and other matter not strictly reporting, are very largely written by non-professionals. The more space that is devoted to these subjects and pictures, the less there is for news, which really means less work for reporters. No one proposes that non-journalists should not contribute to the Press, and it would be futile to suggest that exclusion or the limitation of their work.

The contents of the weekly variety papers, which originated with *Tit-Bits*, are chiefly made up of contributions by non-journalists, when not written or prepared by the office staff. The profession is therefore overrun with amateurs, and no professional body can be organized strong enough to keep them out. And the amateurs are likely to increase as education improves and popular knowledge spreads.

The capacity to report and collect news, as it is a question of training and experience, is more limited, and so is the work of sub-editing; but even these two branches of the profession cannot be kept sacred preserves.

One would be tempted to suggest, in view of the comparison between the wages of the trade union compositor and of the reporter which I have given, that the one remedy for low salaries and professional grievances is trade union action. I do not object to the trade union idea as a method of organization. It has some points in its favour. But there are two possible developments of the trade union policy which I do not think will tend to enhance the status of the journalist or improve his material condition. . . .

Reformers have looked towards a special school of journalism, or special training for journalists, as the means of raising the standard.

No subject has been more discussed at conferences of journalists than the question of the education and training of journalists. It is one of the "hardy annuals" of the Institute. Attempts have been made to give courses in journalism in connection with university colleges, but without much success. There are several schools of journalism in America, and a department of journalism has been founded at Columbia University, New York, which shows signs of being the most serious attempt yet made to educate and train men for journalism. . . .

Education is not, of course, in itself a real test. Some good news gatherers in this country and in America have been uneducated, in the ordinary sense of the term. On the other hand, the more specialized

and general the education that the student receives, the better journalist he will make, provided he is born with an aptitude for the profession. A man may fail to be a successful journalist after having received the best possible education and absorbed all the knowledge in the world, while another may succeed who has had no education in the academic sense, but whose information, although superficial, is used with skill and discretion. Dr. Charles Cooper, the late editor of the *Scotsman*, in his reminiscences insists that journalism illustrates the great truth of the survival of the fittest, and that the journalist is born, not made; but only in the sense that the poet is born, not made, that the wise doctor, the successful merchant, the great lawyer, are all born, not made. It does not follow, wrote Dr. Cooper, that there are none but born journalists. "Many have been made, and badly made." He adds that he remembers able newspaper men who had been tailors, doctors, lawyers, and ministers of religion. . . .

I do not think, as I have already indicated, that trade unionism will be the solution of the problem in journalism; I believe that the best means of establishing satisfactory conditions for the rank and file is the imposition of a compulsory test which will mean some degrees of fitness. Membership of the Institute or of the Union is no test. It is no indication of capacity. It does not influence editors in making appointments. Journalists recognize this themselves. I have received hundreds of applications for vacancies, but not one of the applicants has mentioned membership of Institute or Union as an element which should weigh in his favour.

I look forward to the time when the two organizations which are striving so earnestly to safeguard the journalist's interests will collaborate to do something really big and effective for journalism. I foresee no difficulty in setting up the machinery which will effectually sift the potential journalist from the young man who drifts into the profession without any qualification, and who is a factor in the prevalent low rate of wages. If newspaper proprietors could rest assured of securing a man who, while no actual guarantee was forthcoming of his ability as a journalist—any more than one can be sure that the man who, having passed his examination in medicine or the law, is necessarily competent in practice—at any rate possesses some initial qualifications, there would then be a sure prospect of ending the competition which keeps salaries low.

## THE FUTURE OF THE NEWSPAPER

*Address by Sir Robert Donald, delivered in the Hall of the Institute of Journalists, London, October 24th, 1928.*

THE subject of this address was chosen for me perhaps because, as President of the Institute in 1913, I made a forecast on the future of the Press which, in some measure, has been fulfilled. I predicted, for instance, that the movement towards combinations which had begun would continue on a larger scale until, I said, twenty years hence—I have still five years in hand and a lot is going to happen in that time—daily newspapers would be fewer, but the aggregate circulation would be greater. A paper, I said, which had not at least half a million circulation would not be considered seriously as an organ of the people. Papers which could not spend huge sums on news, on features, and on circulation would be squeezed out; and the paper run as a luxury or for a mission and not as a business enterprise would become too expensive except for millionaire idealists. These predictions have been realized, and even the millionaire idealist has retired from business. I foresaw the increasing nationalization of the Press and a revival of the purely local country newspaper, both of which have come to pass, I also said that newspapers would have to meet competition in the distribution of news by a new scientific device. That also has happened, although radio did not begin until 1920 and broadcasting has been operating in England for only five years. The newspapers ridiculed my prediction at the time and headed it "News turned on like Gas." As I foresaw, there has been an increasing rate of mortality among morning papers in the provinces. A dozen have gone under and only one has been started. In 1913 there were nineteen daily morning newspapers in London, excluding specialist papers: there are now fourteen; there were six evening papers: now three. More evening papers have disappeared in the provinces and only a few new ones up to now have been established. Lord Northcliffe, who was interviewed on my forecast, made among other comments the significant remark: "In the future there will be a further extension of local

evening newspapers." This future extension is only now being made by his brother, Lord Rothermere, with a company entitled "Northcliffe Newspapers, Ltd." As most of the evening newspapers which remain in provincial cities are firmly established and amazingly profitable, only a powerful corporation with practically inexhaustible resources could ever hope to build up profitable rivals in the chief centres of population.

In some respects the Great War assisted the trend of developments which I foretold, but the death of Lord Northcliffe, Sir Edward Hulton, and other newspaper owners, had a greater effect on the changes in the newspaper world.

These changes since 1913 in newspaper ownership have been dramatic and romantic. No such revolutionary transformation has taken place in any other industry. Fifteen years ago Sir William Berry, now at the head of a series of combinations—the largest affiliations of the kind in the world—was a working journalist. Lord Rothermere was concentrating his attention on his magnificent property, the *Daily Mirror*, looking after the Amalgamated Press, and his newspapers in Leeds and Glasgow. Lord Beaverbrook was a daring financier, piling up millions in Lombard Street, and a modest Member of Parliament prospecting the political outlook. Mr. William Harrison, whose spectacular entry into journalism took place only two years ago, was a young unknown solicitor. Yet these four newspaper magnates now control between them over a hundred millions of capital invested in newspapers and kindred enterprises. The capital of the Berry group is itself between thirty and forty millions. The circulations of the newspapers in these groups represent probably about two-thirds of the total sales of daily, evening, and Sunday newspapers in the country.

Another big group is that which has been built round the *Northern Echo* by Sir Charles Starmer, the Rowntrees, and Lord Cowdray. This is widespread, including a dozen daily and evening papers and a large number of country weekly newspapers.

The Berrys control twenty-six morning and evening newspapers distributed over Great Britain from Bristol to Aberdeen, six Sunday newspapers, twenty weeklies, and several hundred periodicals. The Berry system is to allow a good deal of elasticity in their organization, while keeping a firm grip over finance. While the Berrys are the biggest owners, Lord Rothermere's properties are the richest. Apart from his new enterprises, Lord Rothermere's three London properties have repaid their Ordinary share capital twice over in four years.

The shrinkage of newspaper ownership is shown best perhaps by the number of local monopoly ownerships, which include the following

large cities : Liverpool, Hull, Dundee, Aberdeen, Plymouth, Cardiff, Bradford, and middle-sized towns, including Middlesbrough, Preston, Wolverhampton, Swansea, Stafford, Newport (Mon.), Gloucester, and many other smaller towns, where a second paper would be redundant.

We have not yet reached the end of the chain newspapers. The rate of trustification will depend partly on the human element ; but whether the present forceful personalities who direct the big combines retire or disappear, it is safe to predict that the combines, so far from breaking up, will get bigger within twenty years. Ninety per cent of the daily Press, measured by sales, will be under the control of two or three groups working in co-operation, and of a few regional trusts. There will not be more than six newspapers apart from a few country evenings—which will be entirely independent units politically and commercially, and one of these will be *The Times*, whose future is wisely safeguarded. In the near future there will be three fewer morning newspapers in London, and two more evening papers. London, with its population of ten millions within a radius of ten miles of Fleet Street, is absurdly under-papered in the evening field. Lord Rothermere is determined to add to the evening newspapers in the country, and with his vast resources he is quite able to do it ; but outside his enterprise, I doubt whether anyone will challenge the position of the other combines or the local monopolies.

There will be more Sunday newspapers. The colossal growth of Sunday newspapers, which have now an aggregate sale of twenty millions a week, was stimulated by the war and by big prizes for competitions. They are becoming the recognized organs of finance, and in millions of homes on Sunday morning the family devotion consists in filling up coupons in football and racing competitions, in wrestling with crossword puzzles, seeking solutions of other problems or competitions, or in formulating financial speculations—following the “ bulls ” or the “ bears,” or hunting with the stags. The new Sunday newspapers will compete with the national papers which pour out their millions from London and Manchester. The regional Sunday newspapers are published in Glasgow, Newcastle, and Birmingham. There will be more of these regional Sunday newspapers to defend districts against the invaders, one of whose objects is to push their stable companions in direct competition with the local journals.

Stupendous financial corporations have grown up and round newspapers since 1913. Journalism has become a matter of finance. Newspapers have a prominent place in Stock Exchange lists, and shares are given prominence by all the Press of the combines. The giants compete with each other in enterprise and in expenditure ; but in spite of all the

huge sums invested in newspapers, and of unprecedented profits and sales, there has been little originality since the days of Northcliffe—no startling innovations, no new models, no revolutionary advance. The *Daily Mail* was a revolution in its general characteristics and in its features. While the *Mail* was a well-planned discovery, the *Daily Mirror*, which also inaugurated a new development, was an accident. You will find tendencies in the Press, but no marked departure from standards. The nearest approach to innovations comes from the *Daily Express*. This lack of resource and originality is shown in more ways than one. The Press is strangely imitative. If one paper alters its make-up, introduces a new feature, starts a new stunt, or departs from standard in any way, the others are in full cry after the daring adventurer. And then most of the popular features are imported from America. The crossword puzzle and its variants, general knowledge examinations, the comic cartoon strips, are all American importations. The insurance system, without which big sales cannot be kept up, is but an expansion of the system originated by the late Sir George Newnes. The benefits are getting bigger, and that is only a matter of money. Newspaper insurance will remain a permanent feature of journalism. It has become part of the social structure of the country. An agreement will be reached regarding the amount of benefits, as the present mad rivalry cannot be kept up—simply because it won't pay. Competitions will also be stabilized. A foreigner opening our most widely circulated daily and Sunday newspapers would think that the owners vied with each other in seeing who could give away most money for nothing. The coupon and other competitions, in which huge sums are offered, will peter out. This source as a circulation raiser will be exploited until it is exhausted either by making the competitions too difficult, when they will not be worth competing in, or too easy, when they will not be worth winning.

Newspapers have not yet risen to my expectations by using air taxis for distributing papers. It is done by several Berlin dailies on a large scale, and will come here when air routes are better defined and more aerodromes laid out.

You all know that we are on the eve of further marvellous achievements by wireless—transmission of pictures, throwing news on the screen so that you can read it for yourself. You will leave your receiver on at night, and find piles of pages full of news and pictures on the floor in the morning. More news will undoubtedly be distributed by radio, which is thought to be a providential safeguard against the domination of newspaper trusts. The State has kept as a monopoly all the possibilities of radio.



What will happen when we have a Labour Government in power, as well as in office, which finds the whole Press up against it? In Italy 100 per cent of the newspapers support the Government with complete freedom, according to Mussolini. In England 99 per cent of the Press would be hostile to a Labour Government. What will the Government do? It cannot establish a censorship or suppress newspapers or imprison editors. A Socialist Government might declare that the prejudiced and hostile attitude of the Press misrepresents this country abroad, and injures our national prestige and credit. It would seek a counter-offensive. An instrument is ready to its hand. The Government could make radio serve its interests. News collected by the B.B.C. reporters, and from foreign radio services, would be broadcast to subscribers, and amplifiers installed in public squares, halls, and meeting-places, where news and entertainment would be given free. The *Radio Times*, an official State paper, could be turned into a daily published in several national centres, and all listeners would have to buy it, as programmes would be published nowhere else. Its circulation would run into many millions. The Government would develop the news side of the paper and make it a medium of propaganda. In face of a counter-offensive of this kind, the opposition Press would become quiescent or neutral politically. Papers might follow the lead of Lord Northcliffe, at a General Election, and give the Government two or three columns a day in which to state its case. Under normal conditions, the circulation of news by radio, which is bound to increase, would not be detrimental to the interests of the newspapers. The one service is complementary to the other.

The trend in journalism is all towards variety. The definition of news has now no limit. Routine reporting takes up less space in the popular Press and creative news more. One series of feature articles succeed another, devoted to social, romantic, psychological, religious, ethical subjects, and explorations into the unknown describing life in the world to come. The personal note will become more conspicuous, and public men and society women more eager to support this kind of journalism and employ their own publicity agents.

The "magaziney" character of the Press will continue. This development calls for higher literary ability than mere recording and descriptive reporting. The Press will become more and more literary. All the news will be illustrated and the pictures will become more artistic. Newspapers with moderate sales like *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Manchester Guardian* will be able to issue supplements in photogravure or colour. Machines are being perfected which will feed re-reeled picture supplements into the ordinary issues at high

speed. The papers with million sales will have to wait for this development. Country weekly and semi-weekly newspapers will cultivate their fields with more success, especially if they mark out well-defined areas.

Some people may think that the fierce competition now going on between rival groups for supremacy in size, competitions, insurance, and sales will lead to disastrous results on balance sheets. Not at all ! The chief antagonists will hit the papers which are onlookers more than they will injure themselves. This feverish expenditure of vast sums is making competition for the less robust very expensive and may put new permanent burdens on the most prosperous.

The commercial future of the Press, which represents millions of capital provided by hundreds of thousands of investors, is in no danger. The phenomenal prosperity of newspapers since the War has been due, apart from the artificial stimulus given to sales, to the growth of advertising. We are only beginning to realize the psychological effect of advertising and to include advertising as a part of the indispensable machinery of salesmanship. During the last ten years agencies have developed advertising into a great science, employing the best experts and the best brains to show merchants how to sell goods. This campaign is beginning to tell. There is mass advertising for the first time—advertising a whole industry, a town, a province, and the Empire. More industries will combine to advertise, and individual firms in an industry will advertise their own brand of goods. The best remedy for unemployment is more advertising, as advertising creates demand on retailers and stimulates manufacture. Businesses once running on an increased scale must strive to keep up consumption by more advertising. We are only just completing the circle—mass production at one end, salesmanship by advertising at the other, and hustling the merchants and retailers in between. An American banker, in a book on American prosperity, puts down, as an element in fostering prosperity, advertising, "which," he says, "in the first decade of the twentieth century was crude and of pigmy dimensions in comparison with the billion dollar advertising to-day." We are more than a decade behind America in advertising, but we are beating our own record every year. And the new millions which will pour into advertising will surely gravitate to the Press, and the quickened movement in trade will find its readiest response through the medium of the daily and Sunday newspapers.

[When this address was published later in a collection of Institute lectures, Sir Robert Donald added the following postscript.]

The foregoing address on "The Future of the Newspaper" is given

exactly as it was delivered two years ago. I refrain from accepting the opportunity to make additions and amendments which would be easy to do in the light of events which have since taken place. To do so, however, in the case of a forecast, would be to assume prescience, which I do not claim, and at the same time to mislead readers who had not heard the address.

I would only observe that the trend of developments, which I said were on the way, has been arrested, or diverted, by shattering world events outside the newspaper business, but which have reacted upon newspapers with crushing effect, leaving them for the time being struggling against adversity.

While I had twenty years in mind as the period for the accomplishment of the evolution I foreshadowed, I am tempted to point out that a start has been made in the fulfilment of my prediction that there would be fewer morning papers in London.

R. D.

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